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The Sermon

Its Construction and Delivery

By

David James Burrell, D. D.

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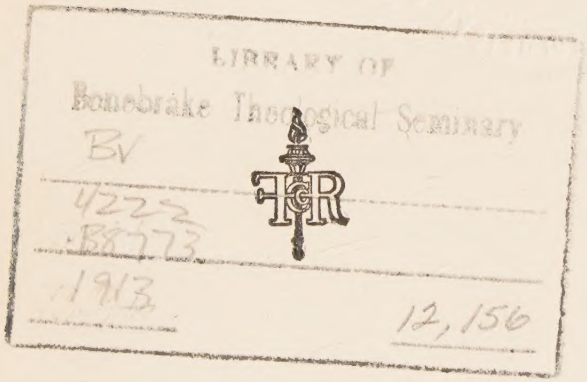
The James Sprunt Lectures delivered at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia

The Sermon

Its Construction and Delivery

By
DAVID JAMES BURRELL, D.D., LL. D.
Pastor, Marble Collegiate Church, New York



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IN nineteen hundred and eleven Mr. James Sprunt of Wilmington, North Carolina, gave to the Trustees of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia the sum of thirty thousand dollars for the purpose of establishing a perpetual lectureship which would enable the institution to secure from time to time the services of distinguished ministers and authoritative scholars outside the regular Faculty as special lecturers on subjects connected with various departments of Christian thought and Christian work. The lecturers are chosen by the Faculty of the Seminary and a committee of the Board of Trustees, and the lectures are published after their delivery in accordance with a contract between the lecturer and these representatives of the institution. The first series of lectures on this foundation is presented in this volume.

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This book is made up, for the most part, of material used in Princeton Theological Seminary, where the author recently supplied a four years' vacancy in the chair of Homiletics. The lectures as then delivered were necessarily more or less informal, being prepared in connection with the work of a busy pastorate. They were afterwards revised and committed to writing for use in other Seminaries and ministerial associations. They have been still further revised and reduced to their present form to meet the requirements of the James Sprunt Lectureship in the Union Theological Seminary of Richmond, Va. It is hoped that they may be helpful to younger brethren in the ministry and particularly to students preparing for it.

David James Burrell.

New York.

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INTRODUCTION

Definition of the Sermon

Introduction

DEFINITION OF THE SERMON

THE primitive meaning of the word sermon is said to be a thrust. Whatever may be the etymological value of this suggestion its logic is sound; because the preacher, whenever and wherever he preaches, must, if he would preach truly and effectively, make a thrust with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

It is not enough to say, with Phillips Brooks, that a sermon is "the communication of truth by man to men." This, as a definition, is *lucus a non lucendo.* It opens the homiletic category to all sorts of literature. A definition must define; though a circumlocution may be required to do it.

Let us say briefly, then, that a sermon is an address to a congregation on the subject of religion, from the standpoint of the Scriptures, with the purpose of persuading men.[1]

1. It is an address; not an essay. An address is necessarily oral and presumably elaborate. There are preachers who read beautiful essays on themes more or less closely related to theology and ethics; but that is

[1] "Sermon: a discourse delivered in public, usually by a clergyman, for the purpose of religious instruction, and grounded on some text or passage of Scripture."—*Webster.*

not preaching. Talking about a thing is not preaching. The essayist takes his hearer by the hand and leads him round and round a centre; the preacher takes his hearer by the hand and escorts him to the next town. It is thus that preaching helps men on.

2. *It is an address to a congregation;* that is, to a company of people assembled to hear religious truth. An assembly on Areopagus was not ordinarily a congregation, but it became one when it invited Paul to speak of "The New Doctrine" and heard his sermon on "The Unknown God."

The words which Christ addressed to Nicodemus in personal conversation, important as they were, cannot technically be called a sermon, since there is no such thing as a "congregation of one."

3. *It is an address on the subject of religion.* The word "religion" is said to be derived from *re-ligare*, meaning to bind back. A sermon is intended to bind the alienated soul back to God.

As followers of Christ we are bound to affirm that there is only one religion; since Christ said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." It follows that the only sermon for a Christian minister is that which leads men to the Father in this way.

The minister, therefore, who uses his pulpit for the presentation of merely scientific or philosophic themes is, so far forth, misusing it.

For a like reason the term "Ethical Sermon" is a misnomer; unless the law be presented as "a schoolmaster leading to Christ." The law is good; but "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." The question for the preacher to answer is, "How shall a man be just with God?" and the only answer is that

given by the preacher's Master, "This is the work of God (*i. e.*, acceptable to God) that ye believe in Him whom God hath sent."

The preacher is an evangelist. An evangelist is a newsman. The news is the Gospel, or *gōd-spel*, to wit: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

4. It is an address from the standpoint of the Scriptures. As ministers of the Gospel we lean back on authority; and our ultimate authority is found in the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God.

It is a mistake for the preacher to dogmatize; that is, to say things as if his say-so were conclusive. The time when a man could assume a tone of finality in the pulpit, as if to say, "I am Sir Oracle; and when I ope my lips let no dog bark," has long passed by. People do not come to church to hear the preacher tell what he personally thinks about this or that, but what he—as a man devoting his time and energy to the study of the Scriptures—has heard God say about it. Nobody cares particularly about the preacher's opinion; but the average man is deeply concerned to know the mind of God.

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, who succeeded him in the pastorate of the Ephesian Church, writes thus: "I charge thee in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, preach the Word. Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teach-

ers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables."

If the preacher does not believe his Bible he has no alternative, of course, but to resort to personal dogmatics; that is, unless he can refer his hearers to some other source of authority. There are, however, only three possible sources of authority for spiritual truth, to wit: the infallible Book, the infallible Church and the infallible Ego. The first of these will probably commend itself as most reasonable to the average man.[1]

The preacher who accepts the Scriptures as the sole trustworthy rule of faith and practice finds there a coign of vantage from which, as an interpreter, to present religious truth. He does not ask his congregation to believe what he says but what God says. The oracles are his Court of Final Appeal. His touchstone of truth is, "Thus saith the Lord."

5. *It is an address with the purpose of persuading men.* "We then, as ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

(1) So far as the unconverted sinner is concerned the object of the sermon is his salvation from the shame, bondage and penalty of sin.

It is, therefore, the duty of the preacher to preach sin, as Peter did at Pentecost, until men pricked to the heart cry, "What shall we do?"

[1] The sources of philosophy and faith are entirely different. Philosophy seeks a knowledge of ultimate facts and principles by studying man, the universe and God, as revelations of such principles, and verifying these by reason—in order to find the final explanation of all existences. Christianity finds the source of its truth in the Bible, accepted as a revelation from God.—*Gregory, "Trumpet Call to the Ministry."*

"In my preaching of the Word," says John Bunyan, "I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin, where His word begins, with sinners; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God by the law doth belong to and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin. Now, this part of my work I fulfilled with great feeling; for the terrors of the law and guilt of my transgressions lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt,—what I smartingly did feel; even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment. Indeed I have been sent as one to them from the dead. I went myself in chains, to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to be aware of. I can truly say, and that without dissembling, that I have gone full of guilt and trembling even to the pulpit-door; and there it hath been taken off; and I have been at liberty in my mind until I have done my work."

And having painted sin in its true colours, it devolves upon the preacher to point to the Cross, as Moses directed the minds of the Israelites to the brazen serpent, saying, "Look and live!" For, as John the Baptist said, "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).

I heard a minister remark lately that revivals are out of date. His exact words were: "I doubt if we shall ever have an old-fashioned revival again. If we do, it will be an ethical revival; and those ministers who are preaching ethical sermons will be responsible for it." It is not easy to define ethical preaching; but

the observation referred to calls up an incident in the experience of Ralph Wells of Sunday-school fame. He was going about among the teachers of his school on a tour of inspection when, pausing in the neighbourhood of a young lady whose class of boys were listening with close attention, he heard her say: "Now, boys, about these Commandments. You know if you keep them you'll go to heaven; and that will be perfectly splendid. But if you break them; if you lie and steal and disobey your parents and so on, you'll go to hell; and, boys, that would be simply ridiculous." I would not intimate that most of the ethical preaching of our time is of precisely this sort, nor would I deprecate the importance of ethics as an essential part of the preacher's work; but I venture to suggest that the preaching of morality without the vital prepostulate of the atonement falls immeasurably short of our business, and is infinitely unlikely to bring in any sort of a revival or accomplish the salvation of men.

(2) So far as the individual Christian is concerned the object of the sermon is his sanctification.

The agent of sanctification is the Holy Spirit; and the instrument which He commonly uses is the Word of God. This is intimated by Christ in His sacerdotal prayer, where He intercedes for His disciples on this wise, "Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." This being so, it is incumbent on the preacher to bring Christians more and more under the influence of the Holy Spirit by leading them further and further into a clear understanding of the Scriptures as the Word of God.

Here is the secret of character-building. The Scrip-

tural word for character-building is "edification," from *aedes* and *facio;* literally, "I rear a temple." Of this temple the foundation is Christ Himself. A Christian grows by looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, and by following Him.

The part of the preacher, in this procedure, is so to present the written Word—which is the appointed medium for the communication of the incarnate Word—that Christians, by the contemplation of Christ, under the influence of the Spirit, shall be moved to imitate Him. For character-building is simply *imitatio Christi.* It is "growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and so unto "the measure of the fullness of the stature of a man."

Sanctification is the complement of salvation. The word "salvation" is a large one. It means more than deliverance from the penalty of sin. Of course it includes that; indeed, that is the Alpha of it. Blessed is the man who has heard Christ say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee!" But alas for him who, rejoicing in this vestibule of salvation, is content to pass no further.

The preacher is under bonds, like Moses, to lead converts not only out of Egypt but clear through the wilderness, into full possession of their inheritance in the Land of Promise.

In this connection read Philippians ii. 12–16: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," etc. The emphasis here is on the word "out." The meaning seems to be that Christians are not to rest in that incipient and narrow salvation which means merely a "title clear to mansions in the skies," but rather to develop their salvation to its largest limits and possibili-

ties in character and usefulness.[1] It is here that the preacher comes to the help of believers by unfolding to them the truths, precepts and promises of the Word of God.

(3) So far as society is concerned the object of the sermon is social reformation. The Word which we preach is like leaven that leaveneth the lump.

The profound truth of the Parable of the Leaven is emphasized by a comparison of Christian with non-Christian communities. Put a church down in the slums and what happens? The vicinage is improved every way. A company of shipwrecked sailors, cast ashore on an unknown island, were fearful lest its inhabitants might prove to be cannibals. Their fears were allayed, however, when one of them climbing the hills to take an observation called back, "Come on, boys, here's a church!" The truth which the Church stands for is the safeguard of social life. The preaching of the Gospel is, therefore, the key-note of true socialism, that is, of that social science which seeks wisely and sincerely the regeneration of society.

At this point the preacher accomplishes his purpose not so much by assailing specific evils—though this may be his duty on occasion—as by the constant and

[1] We would say that the true object and design of Christian preaching, in the largest and most stimulating view of it, is: So to set forth divine truth, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, with such clearness, simplicity, sympathy, power, fullness, love, and utter dependence upon and union with the Spirit of Christ, as to persuade men to receive it truly to the conversion of their souls, and to the upbuilding of their whole life and character in the faith of Christ; or, in other words, to enlighten, renew, and sanctify them unto eternal life in the kingdom of God's dear Son.—*Hoppin, "Homiletics."*

faithful presentation of the Word,—that Word of which it is said, "It shall not return unto Me void, but shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."[1]

In Shakespeare's "Henry IV" the Archbishop is thus reminded of his responsibilities in this respect:

> "Who hath not heard it spoken
> How deep you were within the Books of God?
> To us the speaker in his parliament,
> To us the imagined voice of God Himself,
> The very opener and intelligencer
> Between the grace, the sanctities of heaven,
> And our dull workings."

The Gospel in its relation to society is like the atmosphere, which rests with an equable pressure of fifteen pounds or thereabouts to the square inch on every part of the human body. It touches and regenerates not

[1] There are two modes of preaching, in the present age, that are diametrically opposed. The one presses the Gospel upon me as a saving power, aims at regeneration, and encourages spontaneous conformity to gospel principles. The other dwells constantly upon social and political questions, and attempts to lay down rules that shall govern the entire range of human activity, and to say to men, everywhere and on every occasion, "Thus thou shalt do, and thus." The former is the method of the Reformation, and the true method of Protestant Christendom; the latter, the method of the new reformers and the old Romanism. The one, as Paul teaches, carries back the Church to the covenant "from Mount Sinai, which gendereth bondage" (Gal. iv. 24), to ritual observance and legal obedience; the other carries her forward to the covenant that is from Mount Zion, from "the Jerusalem above which is free, which is the mother of us all," and tends to free spiritual activity by bringing her members more thoroughly under the influence of love, the higher law of the spirit of liberty (see Romans viii. and xiii. 8–10).—*Gregory*, "*Trumpet Call.*"

only the individual but domestic, communal and political life. It begins with one man as a centre and, as in the concentric circles of Hierocles, spreads outwardly, driving out, by what Chalmers calls "the expulsive power of a new affection," all hurtful and iniquitous things. It is apparent, therefore, that the preacher becomes a true social reformer so far forth as he holds himself to the strict duty and privilege of preaching the Word.

(4) Our message is thus, in a very real and practical sense, addressed to the whole world.

The minister is a missionary at large, not only by the terms of his commission "Go ye into all the world," but because the expansive nature of the Word which he preaches makes it tend necessarily to world-wide evangelization. His country parish is a spot for the fulcrum of an Archimedean lever. His simplest sermon—to use a thumb-worn figure—is a pebble thrown into a boundless sea, whose widening ripples bear its influences to remotest shores. By the "foolishness of preaching" a constant, progressive movement is kept up towards the coming of the kingdom of truth and righteousness; and its continuance is destined to realize the old Homeric dream of a Golden Age when the round world shall be bound again "as with gold chains about the feet of God."

It is worth repeating that the instrument which God is using for the most part for the establishment of this kingdom is His Word, which is said to be "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." As a sword it

pierces the seared conscience and convicts of sin; and then, like balm of Gilead, it heals the wound by bringing the soul into pardon and peace with God.

But the Holy Spirit uses, also, the man behind the sword. No doubt God could evangelize the world without us; but in infinite condescension and kindness He confers upon His ministers in a singular manner the high privilege of coöperation with Him. We are promised a sufficient enduement of power for this work. What is that enduement? What is that power? The reference is not to any magical transfusion of supernatural energy; there is nothing mysterious here. The enduement which we receive for service is power in the practical use of the one weapon with which He proposes to bring in prisoners of hope. The sword-drill is the important thing. The function of the Holy Ghost in this connection is to open the Scriptures, to suffuse their pages with light, and to anoint the reader's eyes with eye-salve that seeing he may see and understand. Thus the minister is qualified for service and sent forth as "a workman needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"; in other words he is become an expert swordsman of Christ.

Just here it becomes apparent why the much exploited New Theology is not adequate to the business in hand. In eliminating the divine factor from the Scriptures it undermines the only reliable authority for the fundamental facts of the Gospel and drives one to the logical conclusion that conversion is a figment of the imagination and that revivals are out of date. Let a meeting be called for evangelistic work, and you will observe that the friends of the New Theology are so wholly out of their element that they sit twiddling

their thumbs, while old-fashioned preachers of the Word are planning and pleading for an outpouring of the Spirit and the salvation of souls. The old truths and revivals go or stay together. The so-called "New Evangelism" is a misnomer, inasmuch as it has no evangel. It minimizes sin and sin's penalty; it sterilizes faith; it denatures the influence of the Holy Spirit; it puts dishonour on the blood of Calvary without which there is no remission of sin. But there is an evangelism, a genuine evangelism, which will never be out of date until the last revival shall sweep the last sinner into the kingdom of God.

PART FIRST

Texts and Topics

I

IMPORTANCE OF THE TEXT

THE use of the text is purely conventional.[1] The preacher, should he choose, is quite at liberty to dispense with it; nevertheless the custom is so universal and so well approved by long experience that he would do well to think twice before doing so.[2]

1. As to the Jewish custom. The Jews have, from time immemorial, associated the sermon with the lesson of the day. This was the custom of the rabbis; a custom followed on occasion by Christ and His apostles in their itineraries among the Jewish towns and villages.

When Christ, returning from His first missionary journey, entered the synagogue at Nazareth to worship on the Sabbath "as His custom was," it chanced that the day's lesson was from the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath

[1] In the very conception of it a text is a rhetorical expedient; it is no essential part of discourse considered as such. Aristotle knew nothing of it.—*Phelps, "Theory of Preaching."*

[2] For over six hundred years now it has been the almost invariable custom of Christian preachers to take a text from Scripture and associate their thoughts more or less strictly with that. For the first twelve Christian centuries there seems to have been no such prevailing habit. This fact ought to be kept in mind whenever the custom of a text shows any tendency to become despotic or to restrain in any way the liberty of prophesying.—*Phillips Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching."*

sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." On this "text" He delivered a sermon (of which we have no transcript) on the Purpose of His Ministry, beginning with the proposition, "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

2. *As to the method of Christ.* For the most part the discourses of Christ were not textual but distinctly topical. He found "tongues in trees, sermons in stones, books in the running brooks," and homiletic material in everything. His themes were taken from life and experience, from nature and passing events, as well as from Scripture. He preached from every possible standpoint, to all sorts and conditions of men, on the supreme problem of life. The rising of the sun or the extinguishing of the great candelabrum in Solomon's porch suggested a sermon on His mission as the Light of the World. The great stones of the Temple, which were to be torn down and scattered beyond recovery, prompted a discourse on His Resurrection and Triumph over Death. A beggar sitting at a rich man's gate furnished the caption of an argument on the Last Judgment. The falling of a tower in the village of Siloam, by which a number of persons had recently lost their lives, led to a disquisition on Mistakes as to Retributive Justice. The waylaying of a traveller on "The Bloody Way" from Jerusalem down to Jericho—an event of not infrequent occurrence in those days—gave Him an opportunity of emphasizing, in a most searching manner, the Duty of Neighbourliness. His preaching was Scriptural to the last degree; but He did not by any means confine Himself to "texts" from the Word of God.

3. As to the custom of the apostles. As has been remarked, the apostles on occasion, and particularly when preaching in the synagogues, founded their discourses on portions of Scripture; but not always so. The defense of Stephen in the Sanhedrin was Scriptural from beginning to end, for the reason that he was showing the Messiahship of Jesus and exposing the capital crime of the Jews in rejecting Him; but he had no "text" as we understand it. The text of Peter's memorable sermon on the Day of Pentecost was Joel ii. 30–31, which was suggested by the occasion. Paul, in his discourse on Mars Hill, had for his text an inscription found on a pagan altar, "To the unknown God," with which he associated a passage from the pagan poet, Aratus, "For we are also His offspring"; but, as a rule, Paul addressed himself, without regard to any text, to two themes: *first*, "This Jesus is the Christ"; *second*, His own conversion on the way to Damascus.

4. As to the custom of the early fathers. In the post-apostolic church and for centuries thereafter the custom, not invariable but usual, was to expound a portion of Scripture in the discourse of the day. Thus the sermon was more properly what would now be called a homily, or expository lecture, with practical applications.

5. The origin of the textual method. The use of the text as a prevailing fashion began in the fifth century. Musæus of Marseilles is commonly referred to as its foster-father. The simple fact that it furnishes the easiest mode of procedure is sufficient to account for its general adoption in those days.

6. Disuse of the textual method. The custom, after

prevailing for some hundreds of years, gradually fell into desuetude, owing chiefly to its abuse by the mystics and scholastics. In some quarters allegorizing was carried to a grotesque extreme; in others, eisegesis supplanted exegesis and the preacher made himself ridiculous by exploiting his own views at the expense of the Word of God.

The famous Dr. South, for example, took as the text of a discourse before the Tailors' Guild of London, "A remnant shall be saved."

In one of Spurgeon's lectures to the students of the Pastors' College he says, "I heard the other day of a remarkable text, which was appropriate or inappropriate, as you may think. A squire of a parish had given away a number of flaming scarlet cloaks to the oldest matrons of the parish. These resplendent beings were required to attend the parish church on the following Sunday and to sit in front of the pulpit, from which one of the avowed successors of the apostles edified the saints from the words, 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'"

It is credibly affirmed that one of these text-twisters, taking his theme from "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8), presented his discourse under the following heads:

(1) Who, the devil, is he?
(2) What, the devil, is he like?
(3) Where, the devil, is he going?
(4) What, the devil, does he purpose to do?

It was by such outlandish and unwarranted uses of Scriptural head-lines that self-respecting ministers were finally led to preach without any texts at all.

7. Texts from elsewhere than the Scriptures. As the shadows of the Dark Ages gathered and deepened, the Bible became a neglected book, almost as wholly forgotten as in the period preceding the reign of Josiah. Preachers began to take their texts from the fathers, from Aristotle or other philosophers, from almost anywhere. As a result the message of the pulpit became distinctively ethical, not infrequently secular, and the Biblical factor was largely eliminated from the current consideration of the problems of life.

8. The next step was to drop the text altogether. The necessity of "sticking to the text" being justly regarded as a hindrance to that broad freedom of argument which was demanded by the polemic spirit of those times, a new fashion known as "free discourse" came into vogue. Controversy was in the air. Points of doctrine and of ethics, great and little—some so little that the fierce logomachy which gathered about them seems now like a tempest in a teapot—were argued *pro* and *contra*, with little reference to Scriptural or any other authority. Those were sad days for religion and for the Church of God.

9. The textual method was revived in the twelfth century, *i. e.*, the period of the Renaissance. The leaders of religious sentiment were, however, by no means united in approving it. Roger Bacon may, perhaps, be regarded as the most conspicuous of its opposers.[1] As time passed it again gradually fell into disuse.

[1] He wrote against it with great severity. He prayed God to "banish this conceited and artificial way of preaching from his church." The notion of the topical sermon which he entertained was a singular one. It lets us into the clerical life of the times significantly. He writes, "The greatest part of

10. In the Reformation the use of texts was resumed by Luther and the other reformers and has prevailed ever since in the Protestant Church. It is a singular fact that the infidel Voltaire, towards the close of the eighteenth century, was most earnest in denouncing the use of the text as a violation of the sanctions of Free Thought. It is now so generally adopted that one who discards it must be able to give a clear and forcible reason for doing so.

11. As against the usage it may be said:

(*a*) It is certainly not imperative.

(*b*) It may hamper the freedom of the preacher in the freest and broadest treatment of his theme.

(*c*) It sometimes affords a subterfuge for non-Scriptural preaching. The taking of a text looks like a tribute to inspiration; but unless properly regarded it may become, as somebody has remarked, "a mere pretext" for an avoidance of the Word.[1]

our prelates, having but little knowledge in divinity, and having been little used to preaching in their youth, when they become bishops, and are sometimes obliged to preach, are under the necessity of begging and borrowing the sermons of certain novices, who have invented a new way of preaching, by endless divisions and quibblings, in which there is neither sublimity of style, nor depth of wisdom. It will never do any good."—*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching.*"

[1] An objection to the use of the text is that it is often fatal to the most intelligent treatment of Scripture. Chopping the Bible into fragments, the practice pursued from a host of pulpits through long centuries of abuse, leaves us amazed that the book has survived during centuries of dislocation and dismemberment. The words of Erasmus are needed still: "To get at the real meaning it is not enough to take four or five isolated words; you must look where they came from, what was said, by whom it was said, to whom it was said, at what time, on what occasion, in what words, what preceded, what follows."—*Pattison*, "*The Making of the Sermon.*"

12. In favour of the usage this may briefly be said:

(*a*) It is after the analogy of courts and public assemblages; where speakers are accustomed to address themselves to a proposed bill or resolution.[1]

(*b*) It is something to stick to; a nail "fastened by the master of assemblies," on which the preacher may hang his argument. It prevents "branching." When the preacher leaves his text his auditors know—and he should—that he is "out of order."

(*c*) It gives the backing of divine authority to the sermon; that is, when the preacher duly honours it. And, really, what the people want is not the personal opinion of the man in the pulpit, with respect to the matter in hand, but a frank, well-considered and comprehensive statement of God's word concerning it. The I-say-so of a man whose breath is in his nostrils is not an invaluable contribution to the discussion of any problem of truth or ethics; but a "Thus saith the

[1] The orator who speaks to a toast and the statesman who previous to his address in the legislature calls for the reading of certain resolutions, both of them use texts. The musician varying the air, but at the same time preserving harmony by observing unity, finds in the *motif* of his composition his text; to the painter some familiar strain of song or some stirring scene in history furnishes a text; and when Milton opens "Paradise Lost" with the words,

> "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe;"

or when Tennyson, in the first lines of "In Memoriam," holds it true with another singer that "Men may rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things," they only illustrate the use of the text by the greatest of poets.—*Pattison, "The Making of the Sermon."*

Lord" makes an end of controversy for all such as revere God.[1]

[1] If the Bible be an inspired volume, it is inspired for a purpose. If inspired for a purpose, it is divinely fitted for that purpose. If fitted to that purpose, it is a compend of the truths most necessary to the world in all time. Such a book, framed for such a purpose, can never, as a whole, be antiquated. It can contain nothing which, for the purposes of such a volume, can ever be obsolete. The world will always need it, and will need the whole of it. As a unit, it will be as fresh to the last man as to you and me. This, then, is the strong point in the claim which the pulpit asserts to reverence for its usage in preaching from texts,—that they give divine authority to the sentiments of the pulpit. Yield this, and you revolutionize the pulpit in less than one generation. The instincts of infidelity are very keen in sending out and worrying down, if possible, a clerical usage like this, which is the most vital exponent the pulpit has of its own faith and of the popular faith in inspiration.—*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching.*"

II

SELECTION OF TEXTS AND TOPICS

WITH the dawn of "blue Monday" the question inevitably recurs, "What next shall I preach on?"

Of course the preacher's invariable theme is, "Christ and Him crucified"; but there are innumerable standpoints from which to present it. The text merely marks the standpoint. Variety is to be duly regarded. "Therefore every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

It is easy to get into a rut; the mind naturally pursues the even tenor of its way. Hence the custom of preaching a series of sermons, doctrinal or ethical, historical or biographical. There is something to be said for this method; but, on the other hand, (1) it leaves the casual or occasional worshipper out of the reckoning and (2) it is apt to feed the regular attendant on one sort of diet so long as to endanger his symmetrical growth and also pall upon him.

Fortunately, the possibilities of variety in the presentation of the Gospel are so great that no preacher is excusable for playing wearisomely on an instrument of one string. The young theologue is apt to wonder where his supplies are coming from; but as years pass

he will find that his chief embarrassment is *embarras de richesses.*

(Note: An easy way to avoid going over the same ground too often is to keep, near at hand, a list of texts and topics recently used. A better plan is to make out, at the beginning of each year, an outline, more or less flexible, of subjects to be treated during the forthcoming year. In such an outline there would naturally be a just proportion of doctrine, ethics, etc.)[1]

Now as to the rules by which the preacher should be guided in the selection of his text; this, assuming that his choice is not on mere impulse or haphazard.

First: there may be an occasion which suggests it, such as

(1) An immediate need among the members of his congregation. There may be an epidemic of sickness or, worse still, of some form of unbelief or immorality. In such case let the shepherd remember that it is his business to safeguard the flock. Paul, an ideal minister, has much to say in his pastoral epistles about "false teachers creeping in." A faithful pastor will preach with constant reference to the moral law and "the faith once delivered to the saints"; because the Chief

[1] Dr. John Duncan thinks that the reason why the religion of Matthew Henry was so exceeding broad was that he cast himself with equal reverence on the whole of the Bible, and had no favourite texts. Every preacher is apt to err by neglecting doctrines that need to be preached, characters that ought to be studied, and often whole books in the Bible that deserve to be expounded. Our preaching is often one-sided; sometimes, one fears, it is not even so much as that. Doctrine, precept, history, type, psalm, proverb, experience, warning, promise, invitation, threatening or rebuke—we should include the whole of inspired truth within the circle of our teachings.—*Pattison, "The Making of the Sermon."*

Shepherd holds him responsible for souls entrusted to him.

For example: If some such folly as "Christian Science" should be making inroads in the parish,—creeping into houses and "leading captive silly women" of both sexes,—the preacher's business is clearly and imperatively marked out for him. He might choose some such text as 2 Kings x. 1–7. But let him, under these or like circumstances, (*a*) be careful scrupulously to avoid personalities and (*b*) make sure that he understands his subject well enough to dispose of it effectively, once for all.

(2) The text may be suggested by passing events in the larger parish.

(*a*) The preacher is in great measure responsible for the morals of the community. If there is "graft" in the management of the city or village he is bound to address himself to it. Text, perhaps, 2 Kings ii. 19–22.

(*b*) So, also, in the larger affairs of the nation. Partizan politics are ruled out of the pulpit,—but if Christian citizens vote the wrong ticket, ministers are greatly to blame for it. We are under bonds to "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's" as really and faithfully as we are to "render unto God the things which are God's."[1]

(3) International affairs, also, concern us. The

[1] I despise, and call upon you to despise, all the weak assertions that a minister must not preach politics because he will injure his influence if he does, or because it is unworthy of his sacred office. The influence that needs such watching may well be allowed to die, and the more sacred the preacher's office is the more he is bound to care for all the interest of every child of God.—*Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching."*

preacher is, like his Lord, a cosmopolitan. The world is his parish. War and arbitration fall within his purview. He reads the newspapers to keep track of the expansion of the kingdom of God; and his people should get the benefit of it.

Caution: Secular affairs are not to be treated secularly in the pulpit; but only as they bear upon the religious life of the people, the welfare of the Church and the restoration of the world to truth and righteousness. The preacher is safe, whatever his theme, providing he stands under the Cross while elucidating it.

Second: one may be guided in the choice of a text by a proposed plan of treatment.

(1) He may set out to preach a topical sermon; in which case whether it be doctrinal (*e. g.*, on the Incarnation, the Atonement, or Justification by Faith), or ethical (*e. g.*, on any of the Christian graces), suitable texts will come crowding upon him.

(2) If he proposes to preach an expository sermon, he may select for his text an entire book of Scripture, a chapter (*e. g.*, Rom. viii.), a paragraph (*e. g.*, 1 Cor. iii. 18–23; or one of the parables or miracles), a verse, or possibly a single word (*e. g.*, "Remember").[1]

(3) It may be, however, and more probably, that he would combine the topical and textual method, using a topical text.[2] If, for example, his subject is Steadfast-

[1] The word, however, must be large enough to contain a theme. The young minister who preached a candidate sermon on the word "but" in 2 Kings v. 1 failed to make a favourable impression on the Church Committee, who said, "You may be an excellent scholar and a fine theologian *but* you are not the preacher for us."

[2] The construction of outlines according to topical, textual and expository methods will be found further on.

ness, he may find a suitable text for expository treatment in Ephesians vi. 11–17.

Third: the choice of a text may be determined by its natural cleavage.

On examining a portion of Scripture one often finds that it falls apart of itself, suggesting by its ready analysis the normal train of thought.

(1) Verbal, *e. g.*, "My yoke is easy." (*a*) The Christian life is a yoke. Why? (*b*) It is easy. Why? Give the reasons for it.

(2) Clausular, *e. g.*, "If any man will come after Me, let him (*a*) deny himself, (*b*) take up his cross and (*c*) follow Me."

(3) Logical, *e. g.*, The Parable of the Prodigal Son. (*a*) His going away. (*b*) His life in the far country. (*c*) His coming back. (*d*) At home.

III

SUGGESTIONS AS TO TEXTS

AT times it may be advisable to use *two or more texts;* especially in the treatment of a paradoxical theme. A sermon on The Bearing of Burdens, *e. g.*, would naturally hang on two passages, "Bear ye one another's burdens" and "Let every one bear his own burden." The text "God is love" could scarcely be covered without some reference to that other, "Our God is a consuming fire." [1]

2. It happens not infrequently that the preacher finds it *impossible to exhaust a text sufficiently in a single sermon;* in which case he may announce another on the following Sabbath. But this should be done rarely and with caution, since the next congregation will not be personally identical with the last one.

3. *A portion of a text* may be used; but only when the entire passage suffers no violence by this excision. There are parts of Scripture which, as somebody has said, "are like the coupons on excursion tickets, not good if detached."

[1] The late Professor Hitchcock of Amherst discussed before the Legislature of Massachusetts, in 1850, the mutual dependence of liberty, education and religion. The subject was single, yet threefold: no corresponding threefold text in the Bible exactly expresses or suggests that threefold theme. Therefore the preacher properly announced three texts—one for each of the leading topics of the sermon.—*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching.*"

It is related that when Jean Caturce was brought to the stake for denouncing the errors of Romanism, such as the celibacy of the clergy and enforced fasting, his execution was preceded by an admonitory sermon delivered by the court chaplain on 1 Timothy iv. 1–2: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with an hot iron." The preacher was interrupted and put to confusion by Caturce exclaiming, "Hold! Thou doest violence to Scripture. Read on in verse three, 'forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth.'" He was executed, just the same; but he had the satisfaction of knowing that the Scripture had been fairly dealt with.

4. It is well, usually, to select texts so far *aside from the commonplace* as to win attention at once, *e. g.*, text for a sermon on Unconscious Influence, Acts v. 15; or on Posthumous Influence, 2 Kings xiii. 20–21.

5. If *an old text* is chosen it should be treated in an uncommon way.

There are many passages which are as familiar to Christian people as the beaten paths leading to the doorways of their early homes; passages which are especially hallowed by association, perhaps as the means of their conversion, or by some experience of deep joy or sorrow. Not a few of these are like the scone stone in Westminster Abbey, on which sovereigns have been crowned from time immemorial. Such texts, when treated in a novel way, are invested with a double interest; and

those who know them best are most impressed; as when one returning to the home of his childhood sees new beauty in familiar scenes. Blessed is the preacher who can, by wise ingenuity, overcome the difficulties of a commonplace situation and bring to his people a fresh draught of water from the old well beside the gate of Bethlehem!

Professor Phelps says, "Old Biblical truths can be handled without conceits and without straining; and, thus handled, they are the elementary forces of the pulpit. A preacher needs to believe this. Trust the common stock of Biblical thought, and use it courageously. That very courage lifts a preacher's mind to a loftier level of working. Faithful manipulation of such materials is the thing needed. Do not use them, in the bulk, at second-hand. Work them over. Reconstruct them. Polish them. Put them through the laboratory of your own thinking. Get fresh robes for them from your own emotions. Do something, or the other thing, or all things, which shall make them your own. Quicken thus your own interest in them; and the result will be that, when they go from you, they will uplift hearers to the heavens."

6. *Avoid obscure texts.* The Red Dragon and the Scarlet Woman may wisely be let alone, unless the preacher is confident that he has solved the difficult problems which beset them. People do not care particularly to hear dreams and speculations.

There are many questions which the average man in the pulpit can best answer by saying, "I do not know."

But there are many others, and fortunately the most important, concerning which he may say with assurance, "That which was from the beginning, which we

have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, declare we unto you ; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifest unto us."

7. But *a difficult passage is not to be avoided* on account of its difficultness. On the other hand it may prove, when thoroughly mastered by the preacher, a source of most profitable instruction. The hardest quartz is sometimes richest in gold.

Take, for example, Matthew xvi. 16–19, a passage which has provoked endless controversy. It is one of the pivotal proof texts of the Papal Church ; yet here is a rich mine of argument in behalf of Protestantism, since, when rightly interpreted and expounded, it teaches the vital truth, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ."

8. *A text may be too small* for homiletic use. Not all passages of Scripture are, or were intended to be, large enough for a sermon. "All Scripture is profitable ;" but all portions of it, though equally true, are not equally applicable to the personal needs of all.[1]

9. *Some texts are too large* to be compressed into a

[1] I know a minister whose shoe-latchet I am unworthy to unloose, whose preaching is often no better than sacred miniature painting—I might almost say holy trifling. He is great upon the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badgers' skins, and the typical bearings of the staves of the ark and the windows of Solomon's temple : but the sins of business men, the temptations of the times, and the needs of the age, he scarcely ever touches upon. Such preaching reminds me of a lion engaged in mouse-hunting, or a man-of-war cruising after a lost water-butt.—*Spurgeon, "Lectures to My Students."*

single sermon. It is important to know our limitations, if, *e. g.*, one undertakes to preach on Isaiah vi. 1–8, he will discover that the whole province of theology and ethics is before him.

10. *A good many texts are so complex* as to involve the preacher, and therefore his congregation, in a jungle of thoughts. The importance of unity in treatment and impression cannot be too strongly emphasized. A sermon should be one shot from a cannon rather than a rattling fire of small artillery.[1] Peter's "sum in addition" (2 Peter i. 5–8) might profitably be used as the caption of a discourse on the Symmetry of Character; but when all the graces of character there indicated, namely: "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity," are dwelt on separately and at length, the result is likely to be a considerable waste of ammunition, as in flock-shooting out of range.

11. The preacher is often asked to preach on *texts which have perplexed* one or more members of his congregation. Sometimes this request may best be answered in personal conversation; particularly when the matter referred to is one of individual rather than of general concern. But not infrequently the suggestion is one that may be wisely honoured in public.

A group of young clerks, after a vain effort to agree as to the ethical teaching of the Parable of the Unjust Steward, decided to ask their pastor to preach upon it; and he did so with pleasure and profit, enlisting the

[1] The following advertisement appeared in a New York newspaper: "To Sportsmen. Send 25¢ to . . . and learn how to prevent your gun from scattering." The answer given was, "Put one shot in your gun."

sympathetic attention not only of the group referred to but of others interested in the teaching of Jesus with reference to the rule of common honesty in business life.

It would be difficult to find a minister who has not been requested, once and again, particularly by Christians with morbidly sensitive consciences, to preach on the Unpardonable Sin. There is no good reason why the request should not be complied with, on the one hand because the subject is so generally misunderstood, oftentimes plunging true believers into unnecessary doubt and depression of spirit; and on the other, because it affords the preacher an opportunity not only of giving comfort where it is greatly needed but of urging the unconverted to avoid the persistent rejection of the overtures of the Holy Spirit in the presentation of Christ. This "grieving" of the Spirit is, in the necessity of the case, the unpardonable sin; since it closes the only door that has ever been opened into the blessings of eternal life.[1]

12. In any case, whatever the text, it behooves the preacher *to make it tell.* As he presents the truth which it contains, he is in the attitude of a man buttressed by divine authority. Here is his coign of vantage. He speaks as an ambassador of Jesus Christ; so that his message is not the mere personal opinion of a fallible man but,—so far forth as he is loyal to his text,—a manifesto with the warrant "Thus saith the Lord" emanating from the throne of God.

[1] It is the Holy Spirit who testifies of Jesus (John xv. 26), brings to remembrance His teachings (John xiv. 26), reproves of sin (John xvi. 8), and urges the sinner to accept Christ (Heb. iii. 7–11). The unpardonable sin is also called "the sin against the Holy Ghost" because it is the rejection of this patient, persistent witness to Christ.

IV

SUGGESTIONS AS TO TOPICS

IN the old plays there were many "asides"—spoken into the air, the sleeve or the "flies"—which served a purpose, incidentally, but were easily overdone to the great detriment of the performance.

1. Don't preach asides. Our business is to preach the Gospel. Art, science, politics, metaphysics and the like may enter into a sermon *en passant;* but they are "asides"; and it is never worth while to preach on them for their secular value. The preacher's eye must indeed be on current events, but he preaches only Christ and Him crucified. The crimson thread must be woven into every theme.

2. Don't preach heights and depths. As a rule we make fools of ourselves when we try to be sublime. And to try to be profound is worse still. When a speaker gets above his audience the probability is that he is overreaching himself, as well. A man who knows what he is trying to say will not find it difficult to be simple. A clear thinker is always a clear speaker. The deacons go to sleep when the domine is a somnambulist. If you have anything to say, out with it. Don't be dull. Don't look wise. Don't mumble your words. The people have had enough of sesquipedalian words and involved periods. They are tired of the cant of wisdom, and the cant of eloquence, and the cant of "the cloth." They see through it. They want

clearness, directness, earnestness, sincerity. They want a common-sense Gospel presented in a sensible way.

3. Don't preach infinitesimals. There is enough on the page proper without expounding the fly-speck in the margin. "My text may be found in 1 Samuel xvi. 23. My subject is: 'Music hath charms.'" What a waste! The mountain travails and brings forth a ridiculous mouse. There is an infinite variety of subjects radiating from the Cross, which is the greatest of all; why should we trifle thus with God and immortal souls?

On the table before me lies a volume of sermons, preached to a congregation of liberally educated people, three-fourths of which are about non-essentials.

> "Water, water, everywhere,
> Nor any drop to drink!"

There has been nothing like this since Nero fiddled at the burning of Rome. It is a tremendous mistake to assume that the old subjects are worn threadbare. Men never get beyond the need of air, sunlight and spring water. The most cultured congregation is in deepest need of old-fashioned truth. The lapsed aristocracy must come to Jesus in the old way or never come at all.

4. Don't preach negations. These are important only for the sake of consequent assertions. The iconoclast is a pernicious nuisance unless he has something to put on the emptied pedestal. The Psalmist says: "A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees," *i. e.*, to cut beams and pillars for the Temple, "but now they cut down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers."

Let us not confuse the vandal and the reformer. One wastes; the other builds. Some of our ministers have busied themselves in denying the perpetual force of the fourth commandment; and the prevalent Sabbath desecration of our time is to be laid largely at their doors. They have used their axes also upon the stern morality of the Puritans, with a general laxness in society to show for it. They have assailed "the traditional view of the inerrancy of the Scriptures"; and in doing so have cut away the foundations for many. What is the motive? Or what the recompense? The meanest wretch on earth is one who robs a beggar of his crutch and gives him nothing else to lean on.

Let it be assumed, for the moment, that the Bible is a mere bundle of fables and folk-lore, that immortality is a dream and God Himself a myth; what is gained by showing it? Half-rations of mouldy hardtack are better than starvation. These vandals excuse themselves on the ground that they are destroying error; but it is well to remember the German proverb, "Do not throw out the baby with the bath water." By all means let us clear away the rubbish, but only for the setting-up of new shrines. Let us be builders, declaring the positives, contributing to the sum total of truth and righteousness and so glorifying God.

5. Don't preach personalities. The Gospel itself is sufficiently personal. Coleridge said, "It finds me." And the reason it finds a man is because it searches for him. Never single out an individual in the congregation for either praise or censure. Every one in your congregation needs looking after; but the truth itself, faithfully preached, will do it. Nathan said to David: "Thou art the man"; but he did not say it in church.

The most despicable coward I know is the preacher who, seeing in his audience a miserable sinner whom society has pilloried for his misdeeds, takes occasion to denounce him before all. It looks brave, but it is contemptible cowardice; it is taking a mean advantage; it is playing to the galleries.

A man thus victimized said to me once: "There is nothing to be done. If I reply in the newspapers he will meet me there with epithets which no self-respecting layman would use; if I assail him in the courts he has the advantage of his 'cloth' and the additional benefit of much advertising; if I lay hands on him physically he will exhibit his sores next Sunday and whine for canonization as a martyr. There is nothing to do, except to give the clerical mountebank all the tether he wants and trust to time." But what a reckoning awaits the minister who puts his pulpit to such base uses!

If you have a personal grievance with any man, don't lug it into your pulpit, but go and settle it "betwixt thee and him alone." Or if the grievance be one of "public fame," consider that the man before you is a voluntary attendant on your services; wherefore to put him to an open shame—unwarned and with no opportunity to talk back—is an impertinence so base and cowardly as probably to embitter him forever and permanently exile him from the house of God.

6. *Don't preach "isms" and "ologies."* We praise the "man of one idea" when that idea is Christ and Him crucified; but when his one idea is a small and relatively unimportant segment of truth it makes him inevitably a fanatic and a crank. One minister is a pre-millenarian, and insists on hammering the apocalyp-

tic prophecies into the souls of his people in season and out of season. Another is a temperance enthusiast, and wearies his congregation with perpetual iterations and reiterations of the horrors of drink. Another makes a hobby of church union; another goes round and round the current problems of sociology like an eagle tethered to a stake; another is a pessimist and makes every sermon a jeremiad against church and society and government.

I have heard of an old-time clergyman whose sermons always led up to pedobaptism. A wager was made that no text could be given him which he could not somehow twist in that direction. He was requested to preach on Genesis iii. 9, "Adam, where art thou?" He divided his discourse into four points: "*Firstly*, Adam was somewhere. *Secondly*, The Lord wanted him to be somewhere else. *Thirdly*, He was not where the Lord wanted him to be. *Fourthly*, Infant baptism." This is not more preposterous than the perpetual harping on any other comparatively non-essential theme. A pastor who would have a symmetrically cultured congregation must bear in mind that the Gospel is like a circle with the Cross at its centre. The whole circumference must be preached and the centre never left out.

7. *Don't preach rhetoric.* The essay in the pulpit is responsible for much infirmity in both priest and people. If lawyers were to pursue the method of many ministers in preparing their briefs they would weary the courts and disgust their clients. Our client is Christ, our "case" is the Gospel, our jury is the congregation; and thirty pages of rounded periods are relied on to accomplish the work!

Paul was a great preacher; the only mistake of judgment he ever seems to have made in the pulpit was when he applied the rhetorical methods of the Greek schools so elegantly in his peroration on Mars Hill that he was interrupted before he reached his sermon proper. Epigrams, word-pictures, poetical allusions, striking illustrations and rhetoric generally are of little or no value except as they lead straight to Christ, the Christ who, being lifted up, will draw all men unto Him.

One of the greatest temptations of a young minister is the desire to preach a beautiful sermon. And many a beginner is ruined for life by praises lavished on his round periods. Let everything go, young man, except your desire to convince the people of the truth of the Gospel and win them to Christ. Make your case, whenever you enter the pulpit. Make your case; convince the jury, at all hazards. Cultivate abandon. Magnify your office, but let your scholarly dignity go to the winds. Be true to the truth, true to your ordination; and your blood earnestness will, under God, do the rest.

8. So much for the "Don'ts." What is left for us to do? One thing,—preach the Gospel. All doctrines and all ethics radiate from this centre. There is nothing in the wheel but hub, spokes, and tire; and all are Christ. We sometimes say that preaching has two purposes,—the salvation of sinners, and the edification of saints; but these two are only one. The same truth that wins a soul will edify a soul already won. Growth in grace is merely getting nearer to Christ. Evangelistic preaching—and there should be no other—is a feast of fat things for all who sincerely long for a deepening

of the spiritual life. God's sheep cannot grow lean under the Cross; the most succulent pastures are there. The best preacher in the world, therefore, is he who, in utter self-forgetfulness, makes Christ first, last, midst and all in all.

PART SECOND

The Outline of the Sermon

I

IMPORTANCE OF THE OUTLINE

THE text or topic having been chosen the next thing in order is the building of the sermon. The preacher, as an architect, having informed himself as to the sort of structure required, proceeds, in the order of logical sequence, to construct the framework. This is as necessary to success in preaching as a lawyer's brief is to the effective presentation of his case.

Other things being equal a good outline is the guaranty of a good sermon; and, *per contra*, an imperfect outline (or, still worse, none at all) is the occasion of much flat, stale and unprofitable discourse. Phillips Brooks in his "Lectures on Preaching" says, "In the desire to make a sermon seem free and spontaneous there is a prevalent dislike to giving it its necessary formal structure and organism. The statement of the subject, the division into heads, the recapitulation at the end, all the scaffolding and anatomy of a sermon is out of favour, and there are many very good jests about it. I can only say that I have come to fear it less and less. The escape from it must be not negative but positive. The true way to get rid of the business of your sermon is not by leaving out the skeleton but by clothing it with flesh. True liberty in writing comes by law; and the more thoroughly the outlines

of your work are laid out the more freely your sermon will flow like an unwasted stream between its well-built banks."

The novelist Zola, in his last sickness, was asked what progress he had made with a projected book. "It is finished," he said, pointing to a pile of manuscript. "But this is only your syllabus," said his friend. "True," replied Zola, "but the rest is merely mechanical; it is nothing, nothing."

1. The framing of an outline prior to the construction of the sermon is according to nature.

Thus the worlds were made; all things in logical order: at the outset, chaos, *thohu va vohu;* then light; the parting of the firmament; sea and land; organic life; man. It is a true saying, "Nature geometrizes." Every atom has its caption and demonstration. The diamond is a crystal, true to mathematics; so is the snowflake. There is a plan at the centre of every work of God. Nevertheless, building is not an intuition but an art. Architects are made, not born. A child drawing the picture of a house begins, as likely as not, with the smoke issuing from the chimney. The years teach him the normal method; foundation, framework, pillars and girders, masonry, roof and furnishings.

2. An outline is necessary to the pursuance of a coherent, progressive and convincing argument.

The outline secures unity.

Branching and scattering are fatal homiletic vices. Sermonizing is focalizing. In Carlyle's essays one may find a good illustration of how not to do it. His custom was to jot down happy thoughts as they occurred to him and, when the accumulation was suffi-

cient, to put them together under whatever title seemed most appropriate. This might answer for an essay, but not for a sermon. The preacher who builds his sermons by patching together the contents of a scrap cabinet may say many interesting things in the course of his preaching but cannot possibly be a good preacher; because a sermon is not a scrimmage but "a thrust." Its ultimate purpose is not to interest but to persuade; and a connected argument or train of thought is necessary to that end. "Is a crowd an army?" asks Dr. Herrick Johnson. "Is a heap of stones an arch? Is a lot of ideas a sermon? Other things being equal, a discourse is powerful in proportion to the order reigning in it. The place where you put a thought or thing makes a mighty difference in the effectiveness of use. Suppose a man had an arm where one of his legs ought to be, and the leg was socketed at his shoulder-blade—what kind of a man would he be for doing things? Ideas in speech must be so arranged that they shall be best fitted to do things. This means plan. An architect will never start to build without a plan of the building. A civil engineer surveys his route before he authorizes construction. A general studies the situation and lays out a plan of campaign before his army goes afield. Should a minister ever prepare and preach a sermon without a sermon plan?"

The outline tends to clearness in the elucidation of the theme.

We may learn this, among other things, from the writings of Emerson. A thousand brilliant epigrammatic thoughts thrown together at sixes and sevens leave the mind dazzled, confused and wondering where

the writer stood and just what he was driving at.[1] Pearls must be strung seriatim to make a necklace. A true sermon is a well arranged progression of thought, so clear that the wayfarer though a fool may follow it directly to its destination.

The outline is necessary for conciseness.

Brevity is demanded of the preaching of these days. Say what you have to say and have done with it. But that is impossible unless you have a clear understanding of what you propose to say before you undertake to say it.

In a popular lecture on the Tyrolese Alps I have seen a four-hour sunrise presented in a moving picture so that the whole procession of wonders was done for in ninety seconds. In like manner the preacher is expected to present in half an hour the mental processes of many laborious days; and in such a way that his congregation shall, without seeing too clearly the *modus operandi*, get the full benefit of it. Time was when preachers could go round about by the way of the wilderness, double on their tracks and camp in parentheses at pleasure; but that time has gone by. Thirty minutes to the end of your journey! Across the desert to the Land of Promise! If your sermon has a point, make it.[2]

[1] How large a proportion of the common people, taken at random, could Ralph Waldo Emerson hold together by his cementless periods on Immortality? Yet the pulpit sets itself to the task of making immortality a living truth to men whose days are spent in shoe-shops and hay-fields, and to women who live over wash-tubs and cooking-stoves. The thing cannot be done by the fluent and unscholarly method of the lyceum.—*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching.*"

[2] I commend to every preacher a little bit of noble English in which John Bright contrasts his oratory with that of W. E. Gladstone. "Gladstone goes coasting along, turning up every

The outline is a help to comprehensiveness.

The preacher should treat his theme as a farmer reaps his field, *i. e.*, clean it up. This does not mean that the outline should over-multiply heads and sub-heads. It is well to be broad, providing one does not spread himself out so broadly as to be thin. President Finney once preached a sermon under thirty heads ; of which one of his hearers said, "That was a valley full of dry bones ; and they were very dry."

The outline is helpful to progressiveness.

The use of firstlys and secondlys is said to have originated in the Roman forum ; where the speaker, from his position on the rostrum, emphasized the successive steps of his argument by pointing to the surrounding shops or *tabernæ*, one by one, until he had completed the circuit. The preacher must "get on" thus in his discourse, step by step ; like the man who so lives "that each to-morrow finds him further than to-day."

The outline stimulates the hearer's interest in the advancing train of thought.

Just how far the preacher should thus disclose his points must be determined by his own wisdom. The audience in the forum would be pretty certain to follow the hand of the orator as he pointed to the various stations in the line of his advance.

One's hearers should watch the progress of the

creek and exploring it to its source before he can proceed on his way ; but I have no talent for detail. I hold my course from headland to headland through the great seas." Divisions are the headlands by which the speaker holds his course through the great seas of thought.—*Pattison, "The Making of the Sermon."*

argument like a boy whom I once knew, who, returning from Phillips Academy in Massachusetts to his home on the Western frontier, used to feel his heart beating faster and faster as he neared his destination, counting the stations with a consuming fever of impatience as the brakeman called them one by one: "Elgin"—"Belvidere"—"Rockford"—"Pecatonica"—"Winnebago"—"Ridott"—"Freeport"—home at last!

The outline makes for permanence of impression.

It serves as a mnemonic help. There are many hearers who carry away little or nothing except the points; and this they cannot do unless the preacher is a party to it.

II

CONSTRUCTION OF THE OUTLINE

THERE is a wide divergence of opinion as to the constituent parts of the outline.

Aristotle suggested four: 1, The Introduction; 2, The Proposition; 3, The Proof; 4, The Conclusion.

Quintilian, speaking from the standpoint of a jurist, insisted on five: 1, The Introduction; 2, The Proposition; 3, The Proof; 4, The Refutation; 5, The Conclusion.

Professor Phelps of Andover recommended seven: 1, The Text; 2, The Explanation; 3, The Introduction; 4, The Proposition; 5, The Division; 6, The Development; 7, The Conclusion.

For our purpose three will suffice: 1, The Exordium; 2, The Development; 3, The Peroration.

In Baker's "Principles of Argument" he says: "A good brief ordinarily has three divisions: the Introduction, the Brief Proper and the Conclusion.

"The introduction should state as concisely as possible, by suggestive phrases of a line or two, the facts necessary to an understanding of the discussion: namely, how the question arose; what are the facts admitted by both sides; and, by definition and exposition, what is the exact point at issue.

"The brief proper should by a series of headings and sub-headings very concisely make clear the develop-

ment of the argument by which the writer expects to prove the affirmative or the negative of the question he has clearly stated in the introduction. He should first select the main ideas that prove his conclusion. These he should arrange so that his plan shall show the relations they naturally bear to one another and to the essential idea or group of ideas. In arranging the material he should as far as possible regard climax. All the main headings and sub-headings should read as reasons for the conclusion. The correlation of all the parts should be distinctly marked by letters and numbers.

"The conclusion simply sums up briefly the argument, showing clearly how it has led to a decision in the case. This decision—unless it is given at the beginning of the brief proper as the proposition—should always be stated."

1. In constructing the outline, at the outset *get the purpose of the sermon clearly in mind.* A lesson may be learned from the "spellbinder," speaking from the cart-tail in a political campaign, who marshals his facts with a single object in view, to wit, the gaining of votes.

2. *Choose the best method.* It is like settling down to a plan of battle. Grant is said to have made himself familiar with every strategic point on the field of Chattanooga before he permitted the firing of a gun.[1]

[1] If you will read the familiar correspondence of General Sherman during the war, which was published by the War Department, you will see that, months and months before his great march, he was studying the country through which he was about to go, its resources, its power of sustaining armies, its populousness, the habits of the people, in short, everything that belonged to it, in every relation, and all the questions that could possibly arise in regard to it.—*Beecher, "Yale Lectures."*

3. *Put down the syllabus on paper, provisionally.* And make it out of your own head. "Simeon's Outlines" have quenched many an original spark of homiletic genius.

Dr. Herrick Johnson says, "Beware of books of skeletons, called 'Pulpit Helps.' They are pulpit hindrances; snares of the devil. They may tide the preacher over a present difficulty, they may back him across a stream which he is too lazy to swim, or too heavy with the things of the world to fly over; but the fires of homiletic enthusiasm cannot be fed with them. As well think of rousing the passions with the propositions of Euclid or of heating an oven with snowballs. Sermon plans may be studied, and should be studied, as a matter of course, just as sermons should be studied: as suggestive, illustrative, helpful, revealing many a secret of pulpit effectiveness. But to transfer them bodily to one's pulpit without credit is, in principle, as immoral as to appropriate entire sermons that way."

4. Think over this "skeleton" and *revise it again and again.* Whip it into satisfactory shape. In its original form it, doubtless, had many faults.

It may have had too many divisions. We will probably agree that the shad would be a better fish were it not so bony.

Its points may have lapped over. This is a bad fault, like "hitching" in one's walk.

Or, perhaps, its divisions did not follow one another progressively. Soldiers may "mark time" in parade; but when the bugle sounds for battle they must get on. A sermon should move forward to a climax; forcing upon the congregation a conviction that the preacher is making his case.

5. Having completed the main outline, *fill in the details* with more or less particularity under the several heads, indicating quotations, illustrations, Scriptural references, *et cetera*. A skeleton is good as far as it goes; but there must be sinews upon the bones and skin covering them and breath to animate it (Ezek. xxxvii. 8). A steel frame is necessary to a great building; but men are not expected to live in it.

6. *Memorize the outline thus elaborated.* It stands for your argument; your train of thought. That being well in mind, the preparation will go on *hilariter* and the sermon will find ready delivery.

The superintendent of construction on the great Manhattan reservoir gave the public to understand that the work would require about ten years for its completion, involving the removal of eight million cart-loads of earth. The enterprise was so thoroughly planned, with a view to all possible contingencies, that the calculation was only a few cart-loads out of the way. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." The preacher, of all men engaged in great undertakings, should be most careful to elaborate his plans; for sermonizing infallibly illustrates the old maxim, "Well begun is half done."

III

THE OUTLINE AS MODIFIED BY CLASSIFICATION

IT is important, before proceeding to the construction of the outline, to have a clear understanding as to just what is proposed. This is, we repeat, quite as necessary as it is for a builder to be informed at the outset what sort of edifice is expected of him.

There are, as to relation of topic and treatment, three kinds of sermons: namely, Topical, Textual and Expository.

A topical sermon is one in which the text merely furnishes the theme, the treatment being more or less independent of it.

A textual sermon is one in which the text furnishes not only the theme but the main divisions in the treatment of it.

An expository sermon is one in which the text furnishes the theme together with the entire plan and logical order.[1]

[1] By expository preaching we mean that in which a minister, having, by the aid of grammar, dictionary, and all proper helps, learned for himself what meaning the Holy Ghost intended to convey in the passage he has in hand, and then what uses we ought, in harmony with the rest of divine teaching, to make of it, and having filled his own understanding and warmed his own heart with this truth, tells it to his people with clearness, simplicity, force and fervour.—*John Hall, "Yale Lectures."*

[1] The expository method has Scriptural precedent in its

Examples of the Three Methods

Text: John iii. 16.

First: Topical.

The theme or topic is Justification by Faith.

Any plan of treatment may be adopted without special reference to the text.

Second: Textual.

The theme is the same.

Divisions: suggested by the text:

1. God's love.
2. Its measure.
3. The purpose of it.

Third: Expository.

The theme is the same.

Outline: following the precise order of the text:

1. God.
2. God is love.
3. God loved the world.
4. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem it.
5. The efficiency of this redeeming love is conditioned on faith.
6. The outcome of faith is everlasting life.

Let us take another text: Psalm cvii. 23–31: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth

favour. Ezra standing upon his pulpit of wood (Neh. viii.), which they had made for the purpose, with his group of elders supporting him, and opening the book of the law in the sight of all the people, and reading distinctly, and giving the sense, and causing the great open-air congregation to understand the words as he read them, is the very first original and most ancient type or pattern of our best pulpit work to this day.—*Pattison, "Making of the Sermon."*

the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet: so He bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

First: Topical.

Theme: The Vicissitudes of Life.

Any logical outline will do.

Second: Textual.

The theme is the same.

1. God reigns.
2. The godless man is at his wit's end.
3. The secret of happiness is to be in vital touch with God.
4. And this is life eternal.

Third: Expository.

The theme is the same.

1. The ship sails forth. The voyage of life is under way.
2. The wind rises. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."
3. The sailor is at his wit's end: literally "His wisdom is swallowed up": *i. e.*, he can do nothing to help himself.
4. He crieth unto the Lord in his distress. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Adversity brings a man to his knees.

5. And the Lord hears him. "He maketh the storm a calm; He bringeth them out of their distresses." The efficacy of prayer in time of trouble. "The Lord our God is clothed with might; the winds obey His will."
6. Safe home! "He bringeth them unto their desired haven." All's well that ends well. "Blest be the sorrow, kind the storm, that drives us nearer home."

Another example: Text: Ephesians iii. 14–19: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

First: Topical.

Theme: Spiritual Power.

Any logical outline will do: *e. g.*,

1. The importance of power.
2. Our duty to be strong: weakness is a sin.
3. How secured. By prayer, etc.
4. Results; as to self, others and God.

Second: Textual.

The same theme.

1. Its source: God the Father.

2. Its agent: God the Spirit.
3. Its condition: faith in God the Son.
4. Its object: "that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Third: Expository.

The same theme.

Introduction: "I," *i. e.*, Paul, "bow my knees unto God"; Paul is praying for the Ephesians, members of his former parish; praying for what?

1. That they may "be strengthened."
2. "In the inner man," *i. e.*, spiritually. A Christian is morally bound to make the most of himself.
3. By his Spirit. One of Moody's frequent sayings was, "Honour the Holy Ghost."
4. To what end? First, that Christ may dwell in them. Second, that so they may be able to comprehend the divine love. Third, and be filled with all the fullness of God.

Or another still: Text: Psalm xxiii.: "The Lord is my Shepherd," etc.

First: Topical.

Theme: The Good Shepherd.

Introduction: A favourite Psalm.

1. Bring out the watch-care of God.
2. He is helpful in all the vicissitudes of life.
3. Also in death.
4. And "forever."

Second: Textual.

The same theme.

1. The Shepherd furnishes food.

2. Correction on occasion.
3. Guidance, even to the end.

Third: Expository.

The same theme.

1. Faith. "The Lord is my Shepherd." Do I believe it?
2. Contentment. "I shall not want."
3. Peace. "Green pastures and still waters."
4. Restoration: hope for the backslider.
5. Spiritual growth; "in paths of righteousness."
6. Lifelong provision; "a table in the presence of mine enemies."
7. Numberless and immeasurable mercies; the anointing oil and the full cup.
8. A comfortable anticipation of death; no fear; His "rod and staff."
9. Eternal felicity; "in the house of the Lord forever."

IV

TEXTUAL OR EXPOSITORY OUTLINES

THE derivation of the theme and outline from the portion of Scripture chosen is a most important part of the minister's homiletic task.

1. The text which furnishes a verbal division is not always the best for practical purposes.[1]

Take, for example, "There they crucified Him" (Luke xxiii. 33). This text falls apart of itself as follows:

(1) "There." The place, Calvary; called also Golgotha. Why? Where was it? etc.

(2) "They." The guilty parties in the great tragedy. Jews, Romans, religious leaders, common people. Their various degrees of guilt.

(3) "Crucified." An accursed and ignominious mode of execution. Give a more or less vivid picture of it.

[1] The preacher, to do his work well as an expounder of Scripture, should possess a power of selection. He must know what he himself can do best; what parts of the Bible are especially needed by his congregation; and how to deal in a workmanlike way with the portion when it has been fixed upon. He will not find all Scripture submit itself to the expository treatment. Unless there be unity of structure he will be tempted to substitute a few scattered remarks for the continuous and progressive unfolding of truth; his sermons will be a coat of many inharmonious colours, in little danger of exciting the jealousy of his brethren; and his method, if method it may be called, will be that of the blundering preacher who said that he preferred to hold forth on a long text, because when he was persecuted in one verse he could flee to another.—*Pattison, "Making of the Sermon."*

(4) "Him." The divine victim.

At first glimpse this would appear to provide material for a profitable sermon. In fact, however, it affords nothing but an exordium. The points indicated might be used with advantage by way of introduction to a sermon on the Atonement; but they do nothing more than lead up to the theme. Solomon's porch, however imposing, must not be mistaken for Solomon's Temple.

The lesson to be covered in a sermon on the Crucifixion is to be found not in a mere portrayal of the scene, no matter how picturesque and impressive that may be, but in the facts which lie behind and account for it. Why did Christ suffer? What is the vital relation of His suffering to sinful men? How may I be saved by it? Such considerations as these are what most concern us. In other words, the text referred to is distinctly one to be treated topically and not by the expository method, if we would make the most effective use of it.

2. A paragraph of Scripture, which in its successive clauses furnishes a variety of thought, is not always the best for homiletic purposes. It frequently happens that such a paragraph dissipates rather than focuses the hearer's attention.

Take, for example, Peter's bundle of graces (2 Peter i. 5–8). Here the passage falls asunder easily and furnishes the following heads: (1) Faith; (2) Virtue; (3) Knowledge; (4) Temperance; (5) Patience; (6) Godliness; (7) Brotherly Kindness; (8) Charity. The tendency to enlarge upon each of these is almost irresistible; but, in my judgment, this would be a poor method of procedure. Any one of the specified graces is quite sufficient for a whole discourse and a profitable one

But suppose this passage be treated topically, taking for our theme The Symmetry of Christian Character: which is, indeed, the burden of Peter's thought. In this case the several graces do not furnish either the heads of the discourse or the substance of it. The emphasis is put rather upon the roundness and perfection which comes from an equable cultivation of all the virtues which were found so beautifully blended in Christ. The last clause of the text is then the important one: "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful (R. V., idle) in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

3. The logical division of any text is always to be preferred. As a rule, the text itself provides only the theme and not the framework of the sermon; which then is purely topical. But sometimes a text opens up, in the most surprising manner, a path with successive mile-stones from first premise to conclusion. The sermon thus suggested is distinctly an expository sermon, coherent, progressive, and more or less demonstrative.

For true preaching is reasoning. Rhapsodizing is not preaching. Talking about something is not preaching. Talking about many things, from Dan to Beersheba and from the river to the ends of the earth, is certainly not preaching. "Come now, saith the Lord, and let us reason together." To reason with a man is to go with him from Somewhere to Some-other-where further on. Homiletics is the art of ultimate arrival. The road to conversion is persuasion; and the gate of conviction is *Quod erat demonstrandum.* An essay on truth is not necessarily an exposition of it; wherefore much so-called expository preaching is nothing of the sort.

In view of the foregoing considerations, let us have, for illustration, a suitable text for another expository sermon: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28).

Exordium: Observe the tone of certainty, "We know." Paul is much given to this sort of assertion: "I reckon," "I am persuaded," etc.

Proposition: "All things work together for good," etc.

1. There is a plan in Providence. "Work together." No chance; no happenings. (1) In nature, design and adjustment. (2) So in God's care of us. There is a point above us, scientists say, where all confused sounds meet in harmony. "In that day ye shall know."

2. A comprehensive plan. "All things." No event in human experience must be judged by itself, but as part of the whole divine purpose. The phrase "all things" includes not only sorrow, but sin. Show how sin, wholly bad in itself, may be overruled by divine grace so as to contribute to the soul's ultimate good. He "maketh the wrath of men to praise Him."

3. A benign plan. "For good." Not necessarily for our immediate comfort. A boy at school, conning his lessons while the sun shines and the birds sing without, is not as happy as if he were nutting in the woods. Toil, sorrow, disappointment, are for our discipline. The disciples of Jesus had to be brought into the tempest because "they considered not the miracle of the loaves."

4. A limited plan. "To them that love God." He is good to all; making it to rain on the just and unjust; but He has particular regard for the welfare of those who love and honour Him.

Peroration: In order to get the benefit of this special covenant we must adjust our lives to it; that is, we must cease to be at cross purposes with God and bring our wills into conformity with His. Jacob wrestled with God for a while, then went limping on his way. Was he "worsted"? Nay, bettered; for he was thenceforth willing that God should have His way with him.

This life of acquiescence begins at the Cross, where we surrender to Christ as our Saviour from sin. Calvary is our Appomattox. It brings us into the truce of God. In passing under His yoke ("subjugated"; from *sub-jugum*) we enter into His special favour. Thenceforth nothing can go wrong with us; for if God be for us, who shall be against us?

V

TOPICAL OUTLINES

(A) THE ETHICAL SERMON

TO say that ethical preaching is more to the point than doctrinal preaching is an unwarrantable assumption. Truth and precept alike are vain, except as they express themselves in behaviour. The saying "Religion is a life" is correct, though a trifle threadbare; but a life built on anything but truth is like "The Upside-down House" at the Paris Exposition, which had turrets pointing earthward and foundations in the air. A rightly constructed ethical sermon has its exordium in truth, while a true doctrinal sermon has its peroration in ethics; and both alike are quickened by the Spirit of God.

1. An ethical sermon requires at the outset *a large enough theme.* It is not worth while to ask a congregation of immortal people to give ear to an elaborate argument as to the difference betwixt tweedledum and tweedledee. The great moral principles set forth in the Decalogue are well worth attending to; but there is a disposition in our time to subdivide a subject into a thousand parts and preach on a small fraction of one of them. This sort of analysis is epidemic among seminarians. "It is a sin to steal." Certainly; but to steal what? "A pin." Aye, but what as to the relative guilt of stealing a brass pin and a silver pin;

there's the rub! This is scholasticism. The discrimination is so minute that the learned preacher is in constant danger of being side-tracked and left behind by his inattentive train of beloved hearers; or of discovering that he has not been discoursing on moral principles at all but about a pepper-corn. Preaching is great business: let us attend to the proportion of things. Two verses in Deuteronomy are enough to dispose of the law touching the robbing of a bird's nest (Deut. xxii. 6–7): so that there is no need of greatly enlarging upon it.

2. An ethical sermon should be *expressed in positive terms.* We are not speaking for ourselves, but as mouthpieces of God, who uses no ifs or perhapses or peradventures. However loath I may be to dogmatize in these premises, I must not prevent God's doing so and doing it through me. The mountain of the law is all afire and trembling. It is a solemn thing to preach ethics, because it echoes a Thus-saith-the-Lord. But the preacher must be quite sure as to the oracle. I have heard a man in the pulpit thunder forth admonitions respecting certain forms of doubtful amusement with as much assurance as if God has made him president of an ethical trust. It may be wrong to dance; but no sensible man or woman will renounce dancing because I insist upon his doing so. Theatrical thunder fools nobody in these days. Let me make sure of a Thus-saith-the-Lord and everybody will hear me: but to assume an air of infallibility in the discussion of an open question is unwise, because I am certain to be found out. Moral maxims marked with the red arrow of the King are both indicative and imperative; all others are subjunctive. As to our ethical opinions,

some of them begin with *nonne* and others with *num*, but all end with the rising inflection. If we want to be positive, we must be sure that we are speaking by the Book: the bell and candle are of minor consequence.

3. An ethical sermon is *of value only for its personal application.* We waste breath in elucidating abstract principles or exposing the Hindu suttee. There are sins just around the corner that need to be attended to. Talking about poverty and rapacity and about ewe-lambs in general will accomplish nothing; but tracing a farmer's ewe-lamb to the palace door will sometimes bring the sinner to his knees. Hosea Biglow says:

> "I'm willin' a man shall go tollable strong
> Agin wrong in the abstract; for that kind of wrong
> Is allays unpop'lar, and never gets pitied,
> Because it's a wrong no one ever committed;
> But he mustn't be hard on partic'lar sins,
> 'Cause then he'll be kickin' the people's own shins."

That is the solemn truth, put in a homely way. A sermon is as useless as a lost nail, unless it be directed and driven home.

Shall we be Nathans, then, pointing a gaunt finger at every arch-sinner in the congregation and crying, "Thou art the man"? By no means. Many a preacher who thunders anathemas at a hoary-headed reprobate in one of his most eligible pews thinks himself heroic when in fact he is merely playing Shimei behind a safe covert (2 Sam. xvi. 5–10). It is not necessary to exploit oneself in this manner in order to make the truth effective. A preacher should, above all men, be expert in the art of putting things. He must not fear

the face of man; neither must he tempt opposition and discomfiture. Truculence is as bad as cowardice and oftentimes more disastrous. We are to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Our gentleness makes others great. David Garrick could say "hell" so as to make men tremble; be it ours to say it so that they shall repent and believe. Scolding wins nobody, coaxing wins few: reasoning with heart and conscience takes many prisoners of hope.

4. *The standpoint for ethical preaching is Calvary.* Once it was Sinai, but it has shifted: "We are not come unto the mount that burned with fire" (Heb. xii. 18–29). We preach avoidance of sin not only because sin is violation of holy law, but because it killed Christ. We preach holiness not only because it is the high-water mark of character, but because it pleases Christ, who died for us. The preaching of ethics without reference to the Cross is a vain business. Longfellow speaks of morality without the Gospel as a "kind of dead reckoning; an endeavour to find our place on a cloudy sea without an observation of the heavenly bodies." Another of the poets exclaims: "Talk they of morals! O thou bleeding Lamb, the true morality is love of Thee."

An ethical sermon is, therefore, as incomplete as "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," unless it brings men to the Cross for pardon and to the living Christ for the stimulation of life. It matters not what theme may be chosen, it should find its source and centre in Him. Truth? His was the transparent life Honesty? He gave to both God and Cæsar their own. Sabbath observance? We shall make no mistake if we keep the

Sabbath as Christ kept it. Thus His life illustrates every virtue as His death atones for every sin.

A Specimen Outline

Subject: "Business."

The object of this sermon is to show that the service of Christ is business and should be attended to in a businesslike way.

Text: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49).

Introduction: A man without an occupation, as somebody has observed, "is no better than a dead man and takes up more room."

Pharaoh to Jacob: "What is your occupation?"

The sailors to Jonah: "What is your occupation?"

Ask Jesus, "What is your occupation?" A carpenter? No. Carpentry was a mere incident in His life. As William Carey said: "I cobble shoes to pay my expenses while I labour for God." The real business of Jesus was to save the world from sin. And this is our business, too. "As the Father hath sent Me into the world," said He, "so send I you."

Carlyle said: "The secret of success is to do one thing only and do it well." False. We shall make a failure of life unless we do two things and do both well. One is *brod-und-butter-geschäft*,—the earning of an honest livelihood. The other is to lend a hand in the saving of the world. This comes *first;* as Jesus said, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God."

If this spiritual work is real business, there are certain rules, recognized and honoured in the secular world, which must apply to it.

(1) *Be prompt.* At the ringing of a bell in a

factory village the streets are full of operatives, all expecting to be in their places, as a matter of course, at the instant when the power is turned on. How is it when the church-bells ring?

The difficulty of obtaining a quorum in the meetings of missionary boards or committees on religious work is proverbial. There is no difficulty in securing a quorum of bank directors or political managers; or a quorum in the workshop or the jury-room. Is "the glorious liberty of the children of God" a license to go as one pleases? Why should church officers and teachers in Sunday-school play fast and loose with their work? Why should the mood of the secular world be so imperative and that of the religious world so doubtful? This is not "business."

(2) *Be enthusiastic.* It was written of Christ, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." He said (note the occasion; John iv. 34), "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work."

We profess to believe that sinners without Christ are in danger of hell; yet how indifferent we are! Is it strange that the world sometimes doubts our sincerity? We are appointed to be fishers of men; but good fishermen do not sit dawdling on the shore when the call is heard, "Let down your nets!" This also is not "business."

(3) *Be in haste.* "The King's business requireth haste."

Illustration: In the time of Henry VIII all letters bore the picture of a post-boy swinging from a gallows-tree, with the legend, "Haste, post, haste for thy life!" We are appointed to carry a message of tremendous import, and there is no excuse for loitering by the way.

(4) *Be deliberate.* "Ever in haste, but never in a hurry."

Illustration: Our fire department. With what desperate speed the horses plunge along the thoroughfares to answer an alarm; but once at their destination how careful the firemen are in adjusting the hose and placing the ladders. No time is lost, but there is no precipitation. Property is in danger; lives are at stake; all the more need for carefulness.

Take time to pray; to read the Bible; to make earnest preparation for every duty.

Christ's thirty years in Nazareth: sinners dying every second; yet He patiently awaited the striking of the hour.

(5) *Be practical.* "Not a dreamer among the shadows." Too many castles in the air. Large hopes and purposes which are never realized. "Do noble things, not dream them all day long." Don't dream; do. Don't mean to do; do. Don't promise yourself to do some great thing to-morrow; get up and do some little thing now. "Doe ye nexte thynge."

> "Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute!
> What you can do, or dream you can, begin it."

(6) *Move on.* A good business man is ambitious to do better to-day than yesterday. Not to go forward is to fall back. "Add" (2 Peter i. 5). Keep adding all the while. Minimum *versus* maximum Christians. The best is no better than he ought to be.

Aim at promotion. He who adds to his stock of virtue and achievement to-day will do better still to-morrow, because he has more to work with. "To him

that hath shall be given." "Nothing succeeds like success." Move on! Move up!

Illustration: The Spartan soldier who, on being offered a reward for courage in battle, asked that he might be permitted to march in the van of the army when it advanced the next day.

(7) *Be persistent.* Believe in God and never let go. Faith is the mother of patience. No rest until one can say, "It is finished!"

"Ne'er think the victory won," etc.

Conclusion: This is success: to earn promotion. The high calling of Christ: "Come up higher." The business of heaven: "His servants shall serve Him."

Are we worthy? If called from the service of Christ to-day, could He give us a "recommendation" such as servants ask of their employers when leaving them? What could He say for us?

(B) THE DOCTRINAL SERMON

In these days every tyro must have his whack at creed and "dogma" and orthodoxy. One who lends an ear to philippics of this sort would think that doctrinal preaching no longer gets a hearing: but a canvass of congregations leads to a different conclusion. The average man is as hungry for plain statements of positive truth as he ever was.[1] Wind is poor diet,

[1] The truth is, no preaching ever had a strong power that was not the preaching of doctrine. The preachers that have moved and held men always preached doctrine. No exhortation to a good life that does not put behind it some truth as deep as eternity can seize and hold the conscience. Preach doctrine, preach all the doctrine that you know, and learn for-

though it be filtered through the sweetest hautboy; milk is little better, even when sterilized, except for babes; men want meat; and, though they may be deceived for a while, they are likely, in the long run, to insist on having it.

1. *The great doctrines must be preached;* such as Sin, Judgment, Redemption, Justification by Faith, Sanctification, and the rest; else a minister will lose the art of soul-saving on the one hand and character-building on the other; after which he is, like Samson shorn of his locks, "weak as other men."

2. *It is not necessary to announce a doctrinal sermon as such.* Christ was a doctrinal preacher, yet His hearers scarcely suspected it; indeed, there are some people who have not discovered it to this day. So was Spurgeon, as really as was Jonathan Edwards, only in a different way.

3. *It is not necessary*, in doctrinal preaching, to use *the terminology of the schools.* Supralapsarianism under any other name would smell as sweet, possibly sweeter. We are constantly in danger of leading our hearers into deep water where, as Quarles says,

"... daring venture too far into 't,
They, Pharaoh-like, are drowned both horse and foot."

The rarest art of preaching is simplicity, particularly in

ever more and more; but preach it always, not that men may believe it, but that men may be saved by believing it. So it shall be alive, not dead. So men shall rejoice in it and not decry it. So they shall feed on it at your hands as on the bread of life, solid and sweet, and claiming for itself the appetite of man which God made for it.—*Phillips Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching."*

dealing with profound truths. Anglo-Saxon words of two syllables, when well handled, make a tremendous appeal to thinking men.

4. In dealing with doctrine, it behooves us to be *logical, progressive, and conclusive.* It is one thing to talk about faith and another thing to preach it. Not long ago I heard an alleged sermon on the Atonement which began nowhere and ended where it began, and there was really nothing of the Atonement in it. An essay is not an argument. The former is sauntering, arm-in-arm with a companion, round the village streets; the latter is leading him out of the village and along the turnpike to the next town. A doctrinal sermon is wasted unless it arrives, and unless the congregation arrives with it.

5. Caution: let us take heed and beware of presenting a truth *as if we were ultimate authority upon it.* The well-pondered opinion of a minister will always be received for what it is worth; but an *ipse dixit* is fatal to persuasion. We must needs be certain of our ground, as certain as God's Word can make us; but our certainty does not require that we shall be either dictatorial or intolerant. Most people would rather take truth with a spoon than hypodermically. The temptation to grow hot is always stronger in an argument than in a dissertation; which is possibly one reason why some people object to doctrinal preaching. It rubs them the wrong way; as Shakespeare says: "The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness; you rub the sore when you should bring the plaster."

6. In doctrinal as in all other preaching the *terminus ad quem* is *personal salvation.* Truth is like fruit, only good to be eaten. And the intellectual proc-

esses by which we arrive at truth are, like physical gymnastics, valuable only as they subserve life and health. The truth which saves is Christ, who said, "I am the Truth." This is the Rome to which all homiletic roads must lead. The preacher's business is soul-saving; and this is done only by bringing souls to Christ, as the village people at His approach brought their sick and laid them on couches along the way.

A Specimen Outline

Subject: "The Divinity of Christ."

Text: the words of John the Baptist in Luke vii.19: "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

Introduction: The universal hope. Show how all nations were expecting a Messiah. Intimations in the false religions. The Greeks spoke of the coming of "Soter"; the Persians of Sosiosh; the Egyptians of Osiris. Quote Virgil's Eclogue on the birth of Pollio's son: "The last great age foretold," etc.

The Scriptures are full of this hope; from the protevangel (Gen. iii. 15) to the prophecy of Malachi in the gathering gloom (Mal. iv. 2). It was called "the Hope of Israel" and was really the cohesive force of the nation. At the time of Christ's advent there was a general feeling that the time of fulfillment was drawing near. Many false Messiahs appeared at about that time and were successively exposed and discarded. Then came Jesus, presenting His claim. John in the castle of Machærus; depressed; doubting. "The eye of the caged eagle was filmed." He heard what Christ was doing, and sent to inquire, "Art Thou," etc.

We, also, wish to know. "The problem of Messiah is the problem of man." Quote from Whittier:

"Still struggles in the Age's breast, with deepening agony of quest,
The old entreaty, 'Art Thou He, or look we for the Christ to be?'"

The argument: Show that if the life and character of Jesus be placed over against all the prophecies of Christ in Scripture, in the sacred books of the false religions and in the universal longings of the race, there is a perfect correspondence, point by point.

Illustrate by word-picture from "Indenture." See dictionary.

(1) *The birth of Jesus.* Show how this responds to the general expectancy that when Messiah came He would be Immanuel, that is, both God and man. Illustrate: Anselm's *Cur Deus-Homo.*

(2) *His character.* Only a sinless one could deliver from sin. Where shall He be found? Here Jesus stands solitary and alone. Illustrate by the schoolmen's question, *Non posse peccare* or *posse non peccare?* (But look out or you'll wade in beyond your depth.)

(3) *His teaching.* The common hope was expressed by the woman at the well, "Messiah, when He cometh, will tell us all things." Show how Jesus did this; touching the sublimest and most profound problems with a bold hand: "not as the scribes, but with authority." (*Exousia* here means "from within"; *i. e.*, from the inward depths of his own nature.) His acquaintance with truth was intuitive; wherefore His preaching was without ifs or perhapses. "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Who was this that sent his

"I say unto you" crashing through the teachings and traditions of the past? "Never man spake like this man."

(4) *His miracles.* Unlike all other miracles. They were not only graciously humane but symbolic of spiritual truth. Illustration: "Go tell John what ye have seen." The cleansing of lepers, etc., meant above all that He had power on earth to forgive sin.

(5) *His death.* This is the heart of the problem. His death was vicarious. He staggered up Calvary bearing the shame, bondage and penalty of the world's sin. In this, above all else, he fulfilled the prophecy of Scripture and the longing of the universal soul.

Quote the tribute of the infidel Rousseau, beginning, "Is it possible that this sacred personage should be a mere man?" and ending, "Yea, verily, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God!"

(6) *His resurrection.* (Do not turn aside here to sift evidence: leave that for another occasion.) It was expected that the Messiah when He came would be superior to death; His soul would not be left in Sheol; His flesh was not to see corruption. The resurrection of Jesus is God's Amen placed, like a governmental seal, on His redemptive work.

(7) *His abiding presence.* "All power is given unto Me: and lo! I am with you alway." He is with us by the power of His Spirit (*a*) to save souls, (*b*) to sanctify, and (*c*) to energize His Church for the great propaganda. His kingdom is coming. Progress. Illustrate: "Christendom." There is a world of meaning in the word; centre of civilization; the enthroned Lord of the Golden Age.

Conclusion: If this Jesus is the Christ, why do ye not follow Him?

(C) THE HISTORICAL SERMON

One secret of effectiveness in preaching is to take advantage of the ever-changing moods of the community. This does not mean that one is to discourse on all passing events, trivial or otherwise; but there are times when public sentiment is so engrossed in some particular subject as to afford a special opportunity for enforcing its moral lessons. Then it behooves the preacher to strike while the iron's hot.

One of the best ministers I have ever known was crowded out of his pulpit in 1861 because, while the mind of the people was filled to the brim with the question of slavery, *pro and contra*, he insisted on preaching about "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute." In like manner Sir Thomas Browne, in the time of the English Revolution, sat in his study overlooking the Strand, writing on Urn-burial and kindred themes. The Roundheads were in the field, swords were clashing and thrones tottering; but this was nothing to Sir Thomas; his soul was occupied among the shadows of the dead; he was too literally in the world but not of it.

The way for a minister to keep abreast of the times is to make his preaching bear upon such interests as are closest to human hearts. Our religion touches life at every point in its circumference; and it is our business to give it practical application to common affairs. "No pent-up Utica contracts our powers."

1. *National anniversaries* are not to be ignored. Patriotism is a Christian virtue. The hand of God in

the making of our Republic is an inexhaustible theme. There are episodes in our history which, when properly presented from our ministerial coign of vantage, have all the suggestiveness of Abram's call or the crossing of the Red Sea or the compassing of the walls of Jericho.

A friend recently presented me with the "Congressional Globe" for 1860; and I know of no other book on divine Providence to be compared with it. That was the year when slavery was crouching like a lion for a deadly spring, when Lincoln was being divinely pushed to the front, when overtures were being advanced in both houses of Congress for peace at any price, and when it was becoming evident that the ghost of old John Brown of Ossawattomie was destined, in spite of all mundane plans and purposes, to go marching on. I have found that dusty volume full of material for discourses on God's hand in national affairs.

Why not? The preachers of the Bible found an endless source of suggestion in the history of Israel; and God "hath not dealt so with any people" as with us. Nor are we, as ministers, at liberty to allow such opportunities to pass unutilized. We are commanded to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, even as we render unto God the things that are God's.

2. The value of a historical discourse lies *not merely in its lesson of patriotic piety.* There are great epochs in ecclesiastical history which are full of profitable suggestion to all who believe in the supremacy of character: such as the Church in the Catacombs, the persecutions of the Vaudois, the proclamation of the ninety-five theses of the Reformation, the heroism of the

Huguenots, the signing of the Covenant in Greyfriars Kirkyard, the sailing of the *Mayflower*. These are nails on which to hang important spiritual truths. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not exhaust the roll-call of God's mighties. The men who blazed the way through forests of barbaric darkness to our religious freedom are worthy to be held up for the imitation of all who have entered into the peaceful enjoyment of their heritage. They stood for truth and righteousness and were faithful unto death.

> "They climbed the steep ascent to heaven
> Mid peril, toil, and pain;
> O God, to us may grace be given
> To follow in their train!"

3. It need scarcely be said that historical themes have *no value for us, homiletically, except for their spiritual uses.* It is not history, but God in history, with which we have to do. Nor is Providence the main lesson; but Providence leading on, prior to the Christian era, by diverse but converging lines, to the tragedy of the Cross; and thenceforward, by diverging lines of influence, to the universal spread of the Gospel and its ultimate sway in the Golden Age.

The central figure of history is Christ, marching through the centuries, "the government upon His shoulder," divinely majestic; as Isaiah saw Him on the heights of Edom, with garments stained by the treading of the wine-fat, "glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength." It was for lack of this vision that Hume and Gibbon were unable to account for or to interpret the events they chronicled: for there is no philosophy of history without Christ.

There is no light in its labyrinths except such as is reflected from His Cross. It has no consummation other than His ultimate and universal reign. A historical sermon must be a Christian sermon.

4. *It must be pervaded by an optimistic spirit.* Now and then, events of national significance are treated as if everything were going to the bad. If war breaks out it is significant of the failure of Christian civilization. A massacre in China suggests doubt as to the ultimate conversion of the heathen world. The prevalence of municipal corruption opens up depths of human depravity which the world never dreamed of. Heaven save us from the weeping prophets! The pulpit is the last of places for an exhibition of the doldrums. God is not dead. The mountains are full of His horses and chariots. "The royal standards onward go!"

5. Therefore, a historical theme when adequately treated must be *pervaded through and through with faith.* The bells of Saint Germain, no less than liberty bell in Independence Hall, sounded forth the irresistible progress of the Gospel. There is a prophecy of the Millennium in every passing event, since God rules and overrules in all things, always, everywhere, in behalf of the kingship of His Son. Let no preacher bring history into the pulpit unless he believes in "the one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves," that ultimate "restitution of all things" which no power of earth can prevent.

> "Take heart! The Master builds again:
> A charmèd life old Goodness hath.
> The tares may perish; but the grain
> Is not for death."

A Specimen Outline

Subject: "God's Hand in American History."

Text: "He led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble" (Isa. lxiii. 13).

Exordium: The purpose of the sermon is to show how God, in a most singular manner, has overruled the blunders of men to the promotion of His glory in our national life.

Argument:

(1) The story of these blunders begins as far back as 150 A. D., when Ptolemy made his map of the world. At that time "the world" signified a fringe of countries around the Mediterranean; and had Ptolemy confined himself to these his map would have been tolerably correct; but he undertook to guess at the regions beyond and he guessed wrong. One of his errors was bringing the western coast of Europe and the eastern coast of Asia so near together as to make it appear a small matter to cross the intervening seas.

(2) It so happened that a thousand years later this map fell into the hands of Columbus, who dreamed over it and was misled by it. "If India lies so near to the westward," he said, "why may I not find it?" Whereupon he manned his caravels and ventured forth. Now "westward the course of empire takes its way!"

The voyage of Columbus was "a fool's errand." He hoped to discover the fabulous Northwest Passage; and the fact that he found something better was due to the overruling hand of Providence; for it is true of nations as of men, "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."

As the little fleet pursued its weary voyage a thornbush, borne northward on the Gulf Stream, convinced

Columbus that land lay to the south; whereupon he ordered the shifting of the helm. That changed the course of history. Had the ships continued on their westward course, they would have touched on the coast of Florida. What then? A Spanish settlement and a Papal civilization! As it was he landed on San Salvador, which he dedicated "to Castile, to Jesus and Mary." But the dominion of the new world was not to be thus divided. God had better things in store for us. A hundred years must pass before a permanent settlement could be effected,—a hundred years of "sifting out the hearts of men."

(3) The sifting process began when Luther nailed his theses to the chapel door at Wittenberg. Pope Leo said that was a blunder; so did Charles V; so did the Elector of Saxony. In any case it awoke the thunders of the Reformation and kindled fires of persecution. The husbandman came thus to his threshing-floor to purge it. He wanted men for America, men of courage to stand forth as haters of tyranny, lovers of freedom; purged of superstition, devoted to God.

(4) The result was precipitated by a blunder on the part of James I of England, in demanding that his subjects should conform to the Established Church. It so happened that at Scrooby there was a company of humble people who had a foolish fondness for religious independence. For a while they patiently endured wrong and oppression; but at length they resolved to flee.

They found refuge in Holland; whence the *Half Moon* had just sailed for America. There they remained a dozen years and then followed in the track of the Dutch pilgrims. "What sought they thus afar? Freedom to worship God."

(5) In the meantime the Dutch settlement on Manhattan Island was growing and prospering. In 1664 Peter Stuyvesant turned over the settlement to the British Army and "New Amsterdam" became "New York." This looks, from our standpoint, like an ignominious surrender; but it scattered the liberty-loving Dutchmen to mingle their blood with the heterogeneous people who were settling among us.

(6) Now enter George III, with the Stamp Act. Blessed thrippence on a pound of tea! Blessed Boston tea-party! Blessed Hessian mercenaries! Blessed Independence Bell! Blessed, bloody Valley Forge! And, above all, blessed be God, who maketh the foolishness as well as the wrath of men to praise Him!

The Continental Congress had no thought originally of establishing an independent commonwealth, only of exacting from the motherland the recognition of certain "inalienable rights." Washington had no intention of being a rebel, only of championing the just demands of a loyal people. Thus it often happens: Jehu starts the chariot but God holds the reins.

(7) Our fathers never dreamed of such a country as we have. The Mississippi might have been our western boundary until now but for a blunder made by Napoleon when his exchequer was low. In casting about for means to carry out his plans of conquest it occurred to him that certain lands in the western part of America might be disposed of. Thus came about the "Louisiana Purchase" by which the Republic was extended along its southern borders to the western sea.

(8) But the vast territory of the Northwest was still disputed ground. Marcus Whitman, a missionary among the Indians of Oregon, hearing that definite

plans were on foot to establish the British claim, determined to reach Washington if possible and appeal to Congress. His friends endeavoured to dissuade him. "It would be a great blunder," they said. "How could you ever get across the Rockies in winter? And, anyway, what does Congress care for the country out here?" But Whitman reached Washington; the government took action, adding thirty-six times the area of Massachusetts to our national domain.

(9) But was it worth while to enlarge the borders of a country which groaned under the curse of slavery? John Brown of Ossawattomie came in the fullness of time to answer that question. A fanatic? Yes; crazed by his contemplation of human wrong. And they led him to the gallows tree.

A little later that blunder was followed by one more lamentable. Sumter was fired on: and presently the boys in blue were keeping time to the rude music of

> "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
> But his soul goes a-marching on."

Then the war; and in due time, the Emancipation Proclamation, which was issued as a war measure. It was pronounced a political mistake. Let it rest at that. The foolishness of men is oftentimes the wisdom of God. On went our soldiers; but now they were marching to a different tune:

> "In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
> With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;
> As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free;
> For God is marching on."

So we came to be a free people. It was the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes.

(10) Time passed and we were driven by motives of humanity into another war. It would not have occurred but for the colossal blunder made by Spain in oppressing the people of Cuba. In the logic of events the Philippines fell to our lot; and, for better or worse, expansion became an accomplished fact. Eastward the course of empire now takes its way. It is for us to say what the result shall be.

Peroration: Two lessons.

First, Gratitude.

Second, Responsibility.

It is related that, when Columbus was approaching the shores of the Western World, a flickering light was dimly seen through the darkness. "It may be," said Columbus, "that the faithful wife of some fisherman is waving a torch to guide him on his homeward way." Centuries have passed; and to-day a colossal figure, "Liberty Enlightening the World," stands with uplifted torch in the harbour of New York. For "Liberty" read Christianity; and instead of the torch place an uplifted Cross in her hands. Then shall we behold the mission of America to the world. Let us meet our responsibilities as a Christian people; and the kind Providence that has directed our goings hitherto will continue to lead us until the coming of Christ shall usher in the Golden Age.

(D) THE BIOGRAPHICAL SERMON

A minister has, of all men, most need to beware of ruts. He is always in danger of being guided by his personal preference for a particular line of thought,

forgetting that his congregation is made up of many men of many minds. I know a clergyman who led his people for a couple of years through a dry, barren, and unbroken wilderness of "Comparative Religion," probably because he was specializing for a degree of Ph. D. in that province. Variety is the spice of preaching. Nothing is so hypnotic as monotone; witness the droning of a lullaby. Wherefore a live minister will not perpetually harp on one subject but rather present a variety of themes. He will follow a textual with a topical sermon, a doctrinal with an ethical sermon, a historical with a biographical sermon; and all alike will centre in Christ.

The biographical sermon is effective and popular, unless the method be carried too far. The average man is fond of biography, as shown by the records of our circulating libraries. The reason is plain to see:

> "Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime."

But there are some cautions which the young minister will do well to observe:

1. *Don't preach on every great man who happens to die.* If you do the daily press will probably print your sermon; but what of that? Getting into the papers is small business; in the long run there is nothing in it. The preacher should keep abreast of the times; but playing post-boy is not the best way. A reference to current events by way of illustration in the treatment of important themes is incomparably better than playing second fiddle to the newspapers. Nothing is more damaging to the dignity of the pulpit than this habit

of news-mongering. This is not to say that the death of a great man may not be made a profitable theme for homiletic treatment; but only to decry the melancholy habit of using the pulpit for an excessive display of graveyard panegyric.

2. There is *an inexhaustible supply of material in the Scriptures.* The worthies whose memories are there embalmed were intended to serve for our profit and admonition. Abraham and David, John, Peter, Paul and the Marys have passed in pretty constant review before the churches; but there are multitudes of less familiar names. And it is singular how the nobodies of Scripture repay the preacher for unearthing and the congregation for listening to their story. There is poor, neglected Adam, and that venerable ne'er-do-well Methuselah, the little maid in Naaman's palace, the man of Bethphage, Alexander the coppersmith, the unnamed prophet of Bethlehem-Judah, Simon the Pharisee, Demas the deserter, "one Mnason of Cyprus," the purple-seller of Philippi, Zaccheus the broker, that worthy couple Aquila and Priscilla, Simon of Cyrene, Caleb the optimist, David's Three Mighties, Rhoda the gate-keeper, Mother Eunice, indifferent Gallio and a host of others. It is one of the evidences of inspiration that these and like Biblical biographies are free from superfluous detail, only so much being narrated as may be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

3. *It is seldom wise to preach a series of sermons on any biography.* Dr. William M. Taylor could hold his congregations all winter on Peter; and others have done likewise; but where one succeeds many fail. Interest in any "series" whatsoever is likely to flag;

and transient worshippers are certainly not attracted by it.

It is not an easy matter to preach a biographical sermon, unless the preacher is willing to be commonplace, in which case it is as easy as common conversation. Everybody knows the rarity of good biographies in current literature; but now and then one appears, like Boswell's Johnson, which goes down the ages. Sermonizing is a more difficult art than book-making; inasmuch as it requires more condensation. There is as much carbon in a diamond as in a wagon-load of charcoal.

Therefore the first rule is, Be brief. It is neither necessary nor desirable to enter into minutiæ. Tell the story only so far as it will contribute towards the lesson in view. If a sermon is to be shortened, the thing to cut out is usually the introduction. The least important part of the house is its imposing doorway. It is not well to plunge too abruptly *in medias res*, but we must needs come presently to the point.

The second rule is, Be picturesque. Make the life you are telling stand out. Nor is this difficult; since every life has its salient episodes. Take the story of Herod. There are the *dramatis personæ:* John the Baptist; Herod; Herodias, his wife; Salome the dancing-girl; Joanna the steward's wife; the executioner; and the Spirit of God, present throughout like the Choragos of the Greek tragedies, keeping behind the stage, but directing and controlling all. Then the various scenes:

Scene I. A Marriage in the Castle.

Scene II. The Wedding Reception in the Great Hall.

Scene III. In the Dungeon.
Scene IV. A Banquet in the Convivium.
Scene V. The Execution.

And then the sequel: the haunted after-life of Herod; his cry, "It is John the Baptist risen from the dead!" The deeper depths into which he plunged in his treatment of Jesus. His frightful end. The application is clear. Exit Herod the coward; we have had enough of him.

The third rule is, Be practical. The end of preaching must be kept in view. Its purpose is to turn the hearer from sin unto Christ, from worldliness to the service of God. Wherefore take time for the application. Do not leave your congregation looking at any mere man, but face to face with Christ. The best man in the Scriptures is worth following only so far as he followed the ideal Man.

Now and then it is profitable to study the characters of the unworthy, such as Cain, or Judas Iscariot or Simon the sorcerer; and then the exceeding sinfulness of sin should be used to awaken the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" Whatever the caption of the sermon its *quod erat demonstrandum* is the necessity of looking to Christ for salvation and to the Holy Spirit for deliverance from the power of sin.

One thing is plain; the preacher who, realizing the solemnity of his office, approaches the treatment of every theme, ethical or doctrinal, historic or biographical, in a spirit of prayerful dependence on the Holy Ghost and with a firm resolution to put the last atom of his consecrated energy into his sermon, will never make a failure of it. He may fall short of his ideal,—as, alas! we all constantly do,—but he may

rest assured that the good God who "hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," will use the foolishness of his preaching for the divine glory in the salvation and edification of souls. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

A Specimen Outline

Subject: "Aquila and Priscilla."

Text: Romans xvi. 3.

Introduction: We hear of them first at Jerusalem in the year 33, where tradition says they witnessed the miracle of Pentecost and heard the Gospel. Next at Corinth, A. D. 55, where they were pursuing their trade (Acts xviii. 1–3). Paul, a fellow tent-maker, applied for work in their shop; and he converted them to Christ. A year later they were making tents and holding a Bible school at Ephesus (Acts xviii. 24–26). In the course of time they drifted to Philippi where they had a "Church in their house." Fleeing from persecution they reached Rome (Rom. xvi. 3–5) where mention is made again of a "Church in their house"; probably not much like St. Peter's, the Roman Church of our time. In the year 66 they were back at Ephesus (2 Tim. iv. 19) where, according to tradition, they together suffered martyrdom. "Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they were not divided."

Here we have an old time idyl of married life. Aquila and Priscilla were bound together by a happy chain of many links.

(1) By a divine ordinance. "The twain shall be one."

(2) By a social convention. The institution of wedlock is the basis of social order.

(3) By mutual attraction.

> "Love is better than beauty or wit;
> Love is better than gold;
> Love is not found in the market-place,
> It cannot be bought or sold."

(4) By a common industry. They were tent-makers, and not ashamed of it.

(5) By a common faith. (2 Cor. vi. 14 and 1 Cor. vii. 12–17.)

(6) By their joint service of Christ. They were both "in holy orders," engaged in leading others in "the Way of God."

(7) By a vow of lifelong fidelity.

> "Oh, foul fa' the hands that wad loose sic bands,
> And the heart that wad part sic love;
> But there is nae hand can loose my band
> But the finger o' Him above."

Conclusion: Are such lives unnoticed? No, they are "compassed about with witnesses." The galleries are filled! The world, taking knowledge of Darby and Joan, is forced to confess that marriage is not "a failure"; nay, not even "a lottery." And the Master looks on, rejoicing in the blessedness of those who thus find their happy usefulness in Him.

(E) THE EVANGELISTIC SERMON

It is quite the fashion now, in certain quarters, to cry out against revivals. There is indeed little room for them in the bailiwick of "progressive thought";

that is, if we understand a revival to mean the quickening of a community to the necessity of old-fashioned repentance and old-fashioned faith in the old-fashioned doctrine of justification by faith in Christ crucified, through the power of the old-fashioned, personal Spirit of God.

But however we may believe in revivals and keep on praying for them, the more desirable thing is, obviously, a constant and equable fervour marked by frequent conversions and cumulative accessions to the Church. This is by no means impossible, provided the man in the pulpit is an evangelistic preacher, as every pastor ought to be.

1. Our business is, before and above all, to bring the unconverted to Christ.[1] The ministry in these last times, diverted into tangential lines of thought and effort, has been overmuch disposed to farm out this particular and fundamental part of its business to professional evangelists. This is not saying that itinerants may not be called in, on occasion, to assist an overburdened

[1] In President Faunce's book on Preaching he mentions "four conceptions of the ministry: the liturgical, the magisterial, the oratorical and the educational," omitting the evangelistic altogether. He says, "It is sometimes said that the church is mainly a means of rescue, a life-saving station on a dangerous coast, whose only mission is to deliver shipwrecked sailors from impending death. Surely every church, *like every school,* must be able to perform the work of rescue, must be ready at all hazards to plunge into the surges of poverty and vice and crime and bring out of despair the lost soul. But to make this violent and catastrophic experience the norm and model of all Christian endeavour is to do violence to the essence of the Christian faith." It is scarcely necessary to say that such a conception of the ministry is clearly at odds with the teaching of Christ and His apostles as we understand it.

pastor in reaping and garnering; but as to the wisdom of summoning an outsider to "work up" a revival in the parish I, for one, have my doubts. The necessity for such proceeding may usually be traced to the pastor's neglect of personal duty in the premises. I think I know ministers whose average sermon, year in and year out, is about as well calculated to convert souls as a critical analysis of the principle of germination would be to harvest a crop of wheat.

2. *Every sermon should be evangelistic.* I expect some of my ministerial friends to take issue with this proposition; but it holds, nevertheless. Not that there is no room for "ethical sermons," but, as has been remarked, an ethical sermon when rightly constructed begins at the Cross and again returns to it.

We are accustomed to speak of the double function of the pulpit: first, to win sinners to Christ, and second, to build up Christians in character and usefulness. But a sermon aimed at spiritual culture, if constructed along Biblical lines, must make Christ so attractive as to draw sinners unto Him; and, *per contra*, a sermon commending Christ to sinners, is sure to furnish food for the strengthening of Christian life and character. The secret of both salvation and sanctification is "looking unto Jesus"; wherefore a true sermon always points to Him, saying, "Look and live!"

3. *There is no homiletic standpoint but Calvary.* "We preach Christ and Him crucified." The Jews require some startling novelty; and the Greeks seek after profound disquisitions on abstruse themes; but we are confined to the circumference of saving truth, pausing here and again there to cry, "Behold the wonders of divine grace from this point of view!" Now our

subject is sin, again it is immortality, or judgment, or charity, or truth, or municipal reform, or faith, or brotherly love, or heaven, or hell; but it is always presented under the shadow of the Cross.

Objection first: "This lugs in the Atonement by the ears." No; it does not, if the preacher has a modicum of common sense. But what if it did? Is there any truth so important as this? Are not sinners dying all the while for want of it? Shall a man stand on ceremony when his neighbour's house is burning up? (But perhaps the preacher does not believe that his unconverted hearers are in immediate danger of spiritual and eternal death? In that case, of course, he may as well preach on supralapsarianism.)

Objection second: "To be forever talking about Christ crucified must get to be dismally monotonous." That depends. If a preacher says the same thing over and over again in the same way he must expect his congregation to sigh,

> "Strange that a harp of thousand strings
> Should play one tune so long."

But I have heard a clever musician play charmingly by merely moving his finger along a single string. It is this moving of the finger that prevents monotone and makes melody. The power of preaching is not in changing the theme (that way lies spiritual impotence), but in changing the view-point; and here are immeasurable possibilities of variety.

Objection third: "An old story grows wearisome." True; but the Gospel is not an old story. Here is its singular, supernatural charm. Dr. Eliot at eighty,

sitting by his window with the Bible on his knees, when asked by his daughter, "What are you reading?" answered, "The news." Of course, a minister can so present his message as to make it seem an oft-told tale; but it devolves upon him to illuminate it. A word-picture, a metaphor, an epigram, a crisp quotation will break up a commonplace paragraph like a sunburst or a trumpet blast.

This was Whitefield's method; and his chariot seldom dragged heavily. Preaching on the danger of continuing in sin, he painted a blind beggar led by a dog,—by which he meant the unaided reason,—on a dark night, approaching the edge of an awful chasm. "Good heavens; he's gone!" cried Lord Chesterfield, one of his hearers. "He's gone! Save him!" Had the preacher been content with stating his truth after the usual manner the probability is that Lord Chesterfield's response would have come echoing stertorously from the Land of Nod.

Objection fourth: "The people are tired of hearing ministers say, 'Come to Jesus!'" No doubt there is something in this. But there are many ways of saying "Come to Jesus," just as there are many ways of wooing. Mere sentiment is barred out in these days. A virile presentation of the Gospel is called for. There is a way of making Christ so attractive that the soul needs no invitation to come to Him. The manly ring in Moody's preaching was always recognized; he seemed to be saying: "I have the best thing in the world and want you to share it." The whole sermon should be an exhortation, instead of having one tagged on like an *addendum*. Men are to be drawn to the Cross not by coaxing and wheedling, but by considerations which

appeal to reason and conscience. In other words they must be drawn "with the cords of a man."

A good illustration of evangelistic preaching is to be found in Peter's sermon at Pentecost. The preacher was only a fisherman; but his sermon, of which we have a mere outline, was a homiletic masterpiece.

Text: Joel ii. 28–32.

Proposition: The Miracle of Pentecost, so far from being due to overindulgence in new wine on the part of the disciples, as some averred, was the work of the Holy Ghost, prophesied by Joel, and proceeding from the risen and glorified Christ.

(1) Jesus, while He lived among them, had shown Himself "approved of God" as the Messiah, "by miracles and wonders and signs." These evidences of His Messiahship they had seen with their eyes.

(2) Him they "had taken and with wicked hands had crucified and slain."

(*a*) This was according to "the determinate counsel of God." The death of Christ was necessary, since without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins.

(*b*) But they were none the less guilty in the matter of His death; "with wicked hands they had slain Him." The crimson stain of murder was on them! The murder of the Son of God! Thus vividly were they brought to a realization of their frightful sin.

(3) But God had raised Him from the dead. Proofs adduced from prophecy (Ps. xvi. 8–11) and personal testimony.

(4) This Christ, "being by the right hand of God exalted, hath shed forth this which ye now see and

hear." Proof that the prophecies referred to must apply to Jesus of Nazareth.

Ergo: "That same Jesus, whom ye crucified, is both Lord and Christ." Q. E. D.

Practical application: The congregation, being "pricked to the heart," and unable longer to keep silence, cried out: "What shall we do?" Whereupon the preacher, having driven the nail, clinched it with the exhortation: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Conclusion: "The promise (*i. e.*, of forgiveness and enduement of power) is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

It was a great evangelistic sermon. The result was wonderful, but normal; multitudes were convinced, convicted, converted. There was an immediate harvest of three thousand souls.

Let us preach likewise. The Gospel has lost none of its power. God's Spirit is as "free" as ever, and as mighty to save. The trouble is not with the Word, but with those who profess to declare it. A minister in Scotland reproved an old woman in his parish for her indifference, saying: "I am sorry, Janet, that ye have a quarrel wi' the Gospel." She answered: "My quarrel's no wi' the Gospel; it's wi' you, mon." Perhaps if we were more willing to set forth the evangel with perfect simplicity and absolute courage, we should hear less of the prejudice of the common people against the Church in these days.

PART THIRD

The Body of the Sermon

I

THE EXORDIUM

(A) ITS IMPORTANCE

AN audience is like a spirited team of horses which form a provisional judgment of their driver at the instant of his grasping the lines. Or, to change the figure, as a visitor gets his first impression of a home while waiting in its vestibule so an audience forms an anticipatory opinion of the forthcoming discourse, subject to less or greater amendment, while listening to its introduction. The preacher makes a point, therefore, when he requires his hearers to prick up their ears at his opening sentence. It was for this reason that John Bright, who despised the usual conventions of the Forum, was accustomed to write and rewrite his introductions and commit them to memory with the utmost care.

The object of the introduction is to *intro-duce.*[1] It

[1] A plain worshipper, who had been much upon the sea in the days of the old sailing vessels, remarked with regard to the sermons of a certain minister that they were "clipper-built." Those who recall the special design of such vessels will understand his reference. The peculiar quality of the old clippers was in the formation of their prows, rather than in the general form of the vessel. The cut-water was sharp, clean, and projected backward upon lines which offered the least possible resistance to the waves. Therefore they were fast sailors, while at the same time capable of carrying considerable freight. And the introduction to the sermon is the "cut-water"; it,

is the speaker's way of bringing his hearers face to face with the matter in hand. This was put succinctly by Cicerco in the words, "*reddere auditores benevolos, attentos, dociles.*"

1. In a wise exordium the speaker gets on the right side of his hearers by making them *benevolos*, that is, favourably inclined towards him. This rule was violated by Edmund Burke when he began an address in the House of Commons in this manner: "Mr. Speaker, I am under some embarrassment, occasioned by a feeling of delicacy towards one-half of this House and of contempt for the other." This was scarcely calculated to conciliate them.

A fine illustration of the opposite sort is quoted by Professor Baker in his "Principles of Argumentation" from an address of Lysias, a famous pleader in the Athenian courts: "I think, judges, I must first tell you of my friendship with Pherenicus, lest some of you should wonder why I, who have never been any man's advocate before, am his now. His father, Cephisodotus, was my friend, and when we were exiles at Thebes I stayed with him—I, and any other Athenian who would—and many were the good offices, public and private, that we received from him before we came home. Well, when he and his son had the like fortune,

too, should offer the least possible resistance. It should be no burden upon the attention of the congregation, but rather the reverse. A scow may carry more freight than a clipper, but its sailing qualities are so imperfect that it is capable of making but a single passage while the other vessel is making a half dozen. The clipper is the more effective, and there are some sermons weighted with an immense amount of learning, thought, and argument, which are not effective, only because they are not "clipper-built."—*Breed, "Preparing to Preach."*

and came to Athens as banished men, I thought that I owed them the fullest recompense, and made them so thoroughly at home in my house that no one coming in could have told, unless he knew before, whether it belonged to them or to me. Pherenicus knows, as well as other people, judges, that there are plenty of better speakers than I and better experts in affairs of this kind; but still he thinks that my close friendship is the best thing he can trust to. So, when he appeals to me and asks me to give him my honest help, I think it would be a shame to let him be deprived, if I can help it, of what Androcleides gave him."

2. And then *attentos*. An exordium should be like the court-crier's "Oyez! Oyez!" If the congregation is somnolent it behooves the preacher to wake himself up.[1] Dullness in the exordium is like a lullaby at the trundle-bed. Better be sensational than commonplace, if that were the only alternative. Fortunately, it is not.

It is related of Lorenzo Dow, the old-time mountain preacher, that in one of his camp-meetings, finding the congregation unusually *inattentos*, he opened his Bible and began on this wise: "My text is Philippians four, thirteen: 'I can do all things.'" Producing from his wallet a bank-bill, he said, "Paul, that's simply preposterous; I'll wager this you can't do anything of the sort." Opening the Bible again he read, "I can do all

[1] Mr. Beecher was once asked by a young minister, "What would you do if you had a lot of people in your church who settled themselves to sleep at the beginning of the sermon?" He answered, "I would appoint a very wise and tactful committee to make observations; and, on seeing any of the congregation going asleep, they should walk immediately up the middle aisle and—wake the preacher."

things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Whereupon he replaced the bank-bill in his wallet saying, "So? I withdraw my offer. Of course you can. Anybody can do anything by the help of God." This was an effective method of winning attention. We will agree, however, that the same object could have been reached probably in a better way.

3. But Cicero's third point is most important. The preacher's business is to persuade; but unless his hearers are *dociles* there is no possibility of persuading them; since

> "A man convinced against his will
> Is of the same opinion still."

The ground of docility is expectation. Pupils are willing to learn when they believe their teachers have something to say. Give your congregation the impression that you have a message and they will count it worth while to hear you.

(B) ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS

It was once the custom to divide the exordium into three parts: (*a*) Generale, (*b*) Speciale, (*c*) Specialissimum.

To illustrate: suppose the text for a New Year's sermon be taken from Genesis xxiv. 31, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord"; the exordium generale would relate to oriental hospitality; the exordium speciale to the particular case of Abraham's servant at the door of Bethuel; the exordium specialissimum to the proposed application of the text to the approach of another year of privilege and opportunity.

It is suggested, however, that a better division would

be into the Introduction Proper, the Narration, the Proposition and the Explanation.

1. The Introduction Proper.

(1) This may be, after the old method, in the form of an address, beginning with "Dear brethren" or "Dearly beloved"; though the use of such terms is usually better honoured in the breach than in the observance. They have grown to be so purely conventional as to mean no more than "Yours truly," which may conclude equally well a letter of affectionate regard or a challenge to combat.

(2) It may take the form of an apology; this, however, on the rarest occasion. If the preacher has not had time or opportunity to properly elaborate his discourse the congregation will discover that fact without his dwelling upon it; and any apology, however satisfactory to himself, will probably dissipate anticipation of interest, dulling the ears and hardening the hearts of his audience against him. An apology is like the vermiform appendix; if it has any proper function, nobody has yet been able clearly to define it.

(3) The introduction proper may state "the origin of the question." In other words, like the preamble of the Declaration of Independence, it may give the reasons for taking up the matter in hand.

For example, a discourse on Civic Righteousness might very properly be introduced by a statement of political conditions in the country or community.[1]

[1] The origin of the question may be known to all, as in any discussion of some topic of the hour. For instance, when Lord Chatham spoke in the House of Lords in favour of the removal of the troops from Boston there was no need, at a time when all British eyes were on the American colonies, to explain the origin of the question.—*Baker, "Principles of Argumentation."*

(4) Its purpose may be conciliatory. In Paul's sermon on Mars Hill he showed his dialectic cleverness when, to introduce a subject which he knew would be repugnant to his hearers, he began by saying, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious."

A good illustration of this form of introduction is found in Mr. Beecher's notable address to the people of Liverpool, during our Civil War. On finding himself confronting a hostile audience he began thus, "Ladies and gentlemen, there is one fact that I wish to allude to, not for the sake of reproach or blame, but by way of claiming your more lenient consideration; namely, that slavery was entailed upon us by your action. It was against the earnest protests of our colonists that the government of Great Britain,—I will concede not knowing what were the mischiefs,—ignorantly, but in point of fact, forced the slave-traffic upon us. (*Uproar and confusion.*) I was going to ask you, suppose a child is born with an hereditary disease, entailed upon him by parents who had contracted it through their own misconduct, would it be fair for those parents to rail at their child because it was diseased? (*Cries of No! No!*) Would not the child have a right to say, 'Father, it was your fault, and you ought to be patient with my deficiencies'? (*Applause.*) I do not ask you to justify slavery in us; because it was wrong in you two hundred years ago; but having ignorantly been the means of fixing it upon us, now that we are engaged in a mortal struggle to free ourselves from it, we have a right to your tolerance, your patience and your most favourable constructions."

(5) The opening words of the discourse may take

the form of an appeal for a hearing; such as, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears."

There is a fine illustration of this sort of introduction in the first chapter of Isaiah: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Jehovah hath spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. . . . Come, now, and let us reason together,' saith Jehovah; 'though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured by the sword'; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it."

2. The Narration.

The object here is to clear the way for the argument by a statement of facts. This statement should be clear, concise and comprehensive.

It was remarked by the judge of a court in which Daniel Webster appeared as counsel in a certain case that the laboured argument of that distinguished jurist might have been omitted as totally unnecessary, since the case had been practically settled by his preliminary statement of facts.

(1) The context may furnish the narrative. For example, a discourse on the text, "He is not here; He is risen," would almost necessitate a brief outline of the events immediately preceding the resurrection of Christ.

(2) The historical setting of the text may frequently be used to advantage in opening the theme, *e. g.*, a sermon on self-denial for the sake of others, based on

the text, "If meat make my brother to offend I will eat no meat while the world standeth," would naturally be introduced by a reference to the Corinthian custom of serving at their tables meats which had previously been offered on the altars of the pagan gods.[1]

(3) The narrative may be in exegetical form, giving the meaning of the text by reference to Hebrew or Greek usage. It would, *e.g.*, be quite proper, in preaching on the Creation of the World in Six Days, to show at the outset that word *yom* translated "day," so far

[1] In the eighth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul discusses the point of casuistry respecting the eating of meats offered to idols. What is a merely verbal exegesis of that chapter worth to a popular audience? It is extremely difficult to make an audience feel that the question there raised by the apostle had any religious significance. In the handling of that passage the people need to know some of the historic facts of Pagan worship. They need to get a glimpse of the old Greek and Roman private life. They should see that the question of which St. Paul treats was a very practical one to a Roman Christian every time he went into the market to supply his table. They should be told that the question concerned the common social courtesies of Roman life. Not only was it true that meats from the temples were sold in the markets, but Roman banquets were often sacrifices to the gods. Invitations to dine with a friend were often expressed in language technical to religious worship. Hortensius invites Cicero to a sacrifice to Jupiter: he means that Hortensius desires the pleasure of Cicero's company at dinner. The ritualistic character of private banquets remained in form long after the faith of the cultivated classes in Paganism had collapsed. That which was true in this respect at Rome was equally true at Corinth. The apostle's casuistry, therefore, entered into the conventional courtesies of life in Corinth and throughout the then civilized world. The question in its principle was world-wide, and perpetual in its bearings. Christian life to-day in Paris and New York needs the discussion of it as much as in Rome and Corinth in St. Paul's time.—*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching*."

from always meaning a day of twenty-four hours, is used for a year, a royal reign, a lifetime, an historical period, a millennium and the entire sempiternal duration of the existence of God.

(4) Or it may assume the form of a paraphrase. An alternate phrasing of the text may greatly clarify it.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren began a sermon on "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" by saying that the text might properly be rendered, "The gospel of the glory of the happy God." A statement like that enchains the attention at once.

(5) Or the clarification of the text may begin with a description of its time or circumstance or place, *e. g.*, a sermon on "I am the light of the world" would be introduced naturally and effectively by a description of the lighting of the golden candelabra of the temple, the fact which probably suggested the words referred to; or one on "I am the water of life" by a description of "the effusion of waters," the closing incident of the feast, which prompted Christ to thus address the dispersing multitude. Or one on the text "Peace be unto you" by a description of the scene on Olivet. How eagerly the disciples gaze upon the face that so lately was marked with anguish. The greetings over, they unburden their minds: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He replies, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons." Then He renews the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit; and repeats the injunction, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel!" They gather round Him in love and wonder and reverence; He lifts His pierced hands in blessing and slowly rises from their

midst. As He ascends through the yielding air His eyes are bent on His disciples; His arms are outstretched, and His voice, heard for the last time, dies away in benediction. They utter no despairing cry like that of Elisha at the translation of Elijah; but silently, with strained eyes, follow Him upward into the deep blue until the clouds, like a white pavilion, enfold Him. There are flashes of gold like chariots sweeping through the sky, vibrations of light like the waving of silken banners, then a crimson glory as if the great gates of heaven were rolling back. How simple, yet sublime, this parting of Christ from His earthly friends!

3. The Explanation.

By this is meant a definition of terms. For example, in a famous controversy on Divine Grace, in the Sorbonne in Paris, the speakers each in turn found it necessary to define "sufficient" and "efficient" or efficacious, since a clear understanding and differentiation of those terms was vitally important to the argument in hand.

In a sermon of Frederic W. Robertson on Loneliness, based on the text "The hour cometh when ye shall leave me alone," he begins by saying that there are two kinds of loneliness: one is insulation in space, which may or may not be solitude; the other is insulation in spirit, which leaves one lonely indeed. A man by himself may enjoy the truest pleasures of fellowship; while he may be solitary as he passes along a crowded street.

4. The Proposition.

By this is meant a statement of precisely what the preacher proposes to prove or make clear.

A proposition is an announcement on the part of the speaker that he means to do something more than talk about his theme. A term, such as "Faith" or "Charity," will answer for an essay; but a proposition is essential to an argument. A schoolboy in a composition about "Spring" may say many pleasant things without getting anywhere in particular; but if at the outset he lays down this caption, "Spring is the pleasantest season of the year," that becomes a proposition, and he must proceed to justify it.[1]

The proposition should be stated concisely and in the clearest possible terms. An orthodox Christian who endowed a lectureship in a certain theological school stipulated that the interest of his bequest should defray the cost of an annual course of "lectures on the Divinity of Christ"; but this condition was expressed in terms so equivocal that the man's money is being expended on a course of lectures avowedly designed to show that Christ was not divine, as He claimed to be.

(1) The proposition may be rhetorical in form; as, "I propose to show thus and so." This is after the manner of Virgil's *Arma virumque cano.*

(2) Or it may be logical; *i. e.*, in the form of an af-

[1] The sovereignty of God, for example, is a theme opening the door to almost any kind of discussion of God's sovereignty. "God is a sovereign" is a theme inviting and almost compelling its support by proof. Let the preacher announce for his theme The Sovereignty of God, and we can imagine a hearer at once saying to himself, "Let us see what he has to say about it." But if he announce for his theme, "God is sovereign," that same hearer would almost inevitably be saying silently to the preacher, "You say, 'God is sovereign'; furnish the evidence." Well, the ideal propositional sermon furnishes the evidence. It is bent absolutely and exclusively on proving its case.—*Johnson, "Ideal Ministry."*

firmation, a denial or a question. For example: on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith. Positive, "The just shall live by faith"; negative, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified"; interrogative, "How shall a man be just with God?"

(3) It may be complex: as an indictment in court frequently consists of a number of charges with many subordinate specifications. A text involving the possibility of such a complex proposition is 2 Peter i. 5–8 (R. V.), already referred to: "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge temperance; and in your temperance patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness love of the brethren; and in your love of the brethren love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here the importance of each of these several graces is affirmed as necessary to the symmetry of Christian character, which is the matter under consideration.

It has been assumed that the proposition, as a conventional part of the exordium, should be stated at the beginning of the sermon. These are occasions, however, when it may wisely be reserved for the close.[1] Paul,

[1] Some years ago, at a great dinner in Boston at which many rich and liberal men were present, a minister was called upon to speak. All the speeches thus far had been entertaining, with no special purpose in view. This man wished to make sure, before he sat down, of a large contribution for a Boston charity. He announced his serious intention at once. He made a by no means uninteresting speech, but was listened to silently. At the end there was no response to his appeal for aid. The audience, which had gathered as it supposed merely

in his discourse on Mars Hill, did not disclose his real purpose—which was to prove that "This Jesus is the Christ"—until he had secured the attention of his hearers by an elaborate treatment of the text, taken from the altar to the unknown God. This method has the advantage of holding the interests of the audience in a sustained curiosity as to the speaker's purpose. The Q. E. D. comes as a surprise at last, like the springing of a mine.

(C) SUGGESTIONS

§ 1. It is scarcely necessary to say that all four parts of the exordium, as indicated, need not be used on every occasion.

2. There are times when no exordium at all is necessary; when it is better to plunge at once *in medias res.* So Cicero in his First Oration against Cataline, *Quousque tandem, etc.*

It is related of David Crockett that on his entering the House of Representatives, the speaker began to say, "I have pleasure in introducing a new member from" —whereupon the doughty Colonel broke in, "Let that pass! Colonel Crockett needs no introduction. He has been accustomed to make his own way." There

for amusement, felt tricked in meeting this attack on their purses when they were obliged to listen. The speaker's frank statement of his purpose chilled them too much for his arguments to stir them. Had he spoken at first lightly and entertainingly, then slipped skillfully into more serious matters, and, by well-told anecdotes and strong appeals, roused their sympathies in the object of his interest, he might then have closed with his appeal for aid, with a strong probability of far different results.—*Baker, "Principles of Argumentation."*

are sermons, likewise, that need no introduction. The abrupt method is sometimes the best one.[1]

3. As a rule, the exordium should be as brief as possible. The address of the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel xii. 1–10 was mostly introduction; but there was a special reason for this. The Parable of the Little Ewe-Lamb led up directly to the proposition, which was stated last, "Thou art the man!" All the remainder of Nathan's discourse was "Practical application"; and it accomplished its purpose in bringing the audience to its knees.[2]

The introduction of "Paradise Lost" is in only twenty-five lines, and none the less effective on that account.

[1] A certain editor's advice to his correspondents is not out of place in this connection. He told them through the columns of his paper that if they had some item of interest to communicate it was well to introduce it with some careful and elaborate piece of rhetorical work, in which they should exert themselves to render their composition as elegant and classical as possible. This introduction was to be followed by the plainest possible statement of the facts in the case, without ornamentation or embellishment, and with no figures of speech or illustrations that did not make the matter more distinctly clear. He again advised them to follow this statement with a peroration in which their most elegant writing should be done. All their flights of fancy were to be reserved for the peroration, all their most elaborate work. "Then," he added in conclusion, "cut off the introduction and the peroration, and send us the rest."—*Breed, "Preparing to Preach."*

[2] The portico should be of the same style as the main structure, it should be harmonious with it in design, it should be modest in its proportion, and severe rather than florid in its character, and it should not attract too much attention to itself, but rather lead at once into the building. To fail in any of these particulars is as unfortunate in homiletics as it is in architecture.—*Pattison, "The Making of the Sermon."*

It was once remarked of John Howe, whose introductions were unnecessarily drawn out, that "he was so long laying the table-cloth as to deprive his hearers of the pleasure of dining."

4. One of the main purposes of the exordium is to enable the preacher and his hearers to start on common ground. In courts and deliberative assemblies it is usual for speakers, at the outset of an argument, to state the points on which the opposing parties are agreed. This clears the deck for action.

Jonathan Edwards, the greatest of modern dialecticians, was accustomed to begin a sermon by laying down premises and postulates which, if granted, made his subsequent argument an easy matter and its conclusion inevitable. It has been said of his famous essay on the Freedom of the Human Will that "one who gets aboard is bound to travel with him to his journey's end." The speaker who desires to carry his point will do well to oblige his hearers, at the outset, to get aboard with him.

5. It is advisable to study variety in one's exordiums.

(1) The easy method is to find the exordium in the context. This is sometimes necessary and frequently wise; but it may become so habitual as to grow wearisome.

(2) The exordium may be historical. A sermon on the Miracle of the Resurrection based upon the text Matthew xii. 38–40, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas, etc.," might begin with a contextual exordium, stating the unreasonable attitude of the scribes and Pharisees towards Christ and

the circumstances under which they made this demand for a sign; or with an historical introduction referring to the miraculous deliverance of Jonah from "the belly of hell." Either or both would be good if not too long drawn out.

(3) The exordium may be descriptive. An illustration is found in Spurgeon's sermon on the text, "He giveth songs in the night." "The world hath its night. The sun shineth by day and men go forth to their labours; but they grow weary and nightfall cometh on like a sweet boon from heaven. Darkness draweth the curtains and shutteth out the light which would prevent our eyes from slumber; while the calm stillness permits us to rest upon the lap of ease and there forget a while our cares, until the morning sun appeareth. And an angel puts his hand upon the curtain and withdraws it once again, touches our eyelids and bids us rise and proceed to the labours of the day. Night is one of the greatest blessings men enjoy; we have many reasons to thank God for it. Yet night is to many a gloomy season. There is the pestilence that walketh in darkness; there is the terror by night; there is the dread of robbers and of foul disease, with all those fears that the timorous know, when there is no light for discerning. It is then they fancy that spiritual beings walk the earth; though if they knew rightly they would rejoice to find it true that

> Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth
> Unseen, both when we sleep and when we wake,

and that at all times they are round about us, not more by night than by day. Night is the season of terror to most men. Yet even the night hath its songs."

(4) The exordium may be found in some passing event; as when the sermon is suggested by impending war or other public occasion of sorrow or rejoicing. It is quite proper that such occasion should be taken advantage of by the preacher in making an appeal to the reason and conscience of his congregation. Christ Himself set the example of it.

6. The exordium should not begin too far back. It is well, as a rule, to steer clear of creation and the Jews. Sir Walter Scott would be far and away the most popular of novelists were it not that his introductions are so interminable. A sermon should not be built on the architectural lines of the Egyptian temples, the pillared corridors of which were so vast that the worshipper was likely to weary before entering the adytum to bow before his mummied ibex or other disappointing god.

7. The introduction should not be used by the preacher as a means of "working himself up." It was said of Robert Hall that "he required half an hour in each discourse before he was ready for business." The working up process should all be gone through with before the preacher climbs the pulpit stairs. He should be ready for business at once; ready for the working up not of himself but of his congregation from the opening word.

8. It may be wise sometimes to write the exordium after the sermon proper has been fully prepared. This will not infrequently economize labour; for every minister knows what it is to discard a carefully-prepared introduction on finding that it was too long, or too tangential to the theme, or unnecessary or, for some other reason, better left out.

9. The crucial test of an introduction is the question, Does it introduce? Does it clear the decks for the business in hand? Is it effective? Does it win the attention of the audience and prepare them for what comes further on?

When Joseph Cook brought in Shakespeare, with the red-handed queen in the night-walking soliloquy, to point a lecture on Conscience, saying, "Out, damned spot; out, I say! Here's the smell of blood still! All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand!" and the comment of the royal leech, "More needs she the divine than the physician; God, God forgive us all!" he showed his singular skill in getting the eyes and ears of his auditors and forcing them to "get aboard," while he carried them through an argument on Conscience as a fallible but helpful and necessary guide to character and right living; a dry enough theme in the hands of one unable to enliven it.

II

THE ARGUMENT

(A) ITS IMPORTANCE

IT is obvious that inasmuch as the preacher's object is persuasion, his appeal must be addressed to the reasoning faculties of those who hear him. Professor Hoppin says: "There can be no forcible presentation of truth to the reason which is not itself psychologically rational or is not based upon a true philosophy of thought. A sermon should have logical, in opposition to illogical, thinking and requires reasoning, or the giving of reasons, otherwise it would go forth unballasted on the rough and stormy sea of human opinion."

The lack of argument in preaching is, no doubt, largely responsible for the alienation of men like the poet Otway, who in his "Venice Preserved," expressed his views in these words:

> "You want to lead
> My reason blindfold like a hamper'd lion,
> Check'd of his noble vigour: then, when baited
> Down to obedient tameness, may it couch
> And show strange tricks which you call signs of faith."[1]

[1] The pulpit is responsible for a large measure of the polite indifference with which so very many sermons are treated by men who assume no such attitude in regard to serious intellectual effort. We have still need to lay to heart John Foster's com-

The commonest conversation, though it be only respecting the weather or the crops, presently becomes flat, stale and unprofitable unless it leads to some difference of opinion. The interest flags and the conference breaks up when simply indisputable commonplaces are bandied to and fro.

In political life a man's stature is estimated sooner or later by his mastery of logic. Here is the line, running along the borders of great civic principles, which differentiates the statesman from the demagogue. An appeal to passion may inflame a mob for the moment, but the people are governed by sound reason in the long run.

The preacher, above all other men, is expected to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him. And the sermon is his opportunity. He is like an advocate in court with a case to argue. Preaching is more than talking about a thing. Clear, succinct, well grounded, cumulative, progressive and convincing statements are what tell. Pretty periods and striking epigrams are merely flowers along the way.

I do not go with those who affirm that the time for argument in the pulpit has gone by. So long as there is a single sinner left on earth who rejects the Gospel of Christ there will be need of proving to him its "sweet reasonableness" in order that he may accept it. The fact that there is in some quarters a strong prejudice against logic or argumentation will perhaps account for the feeble sentimentalism which is preached in some pulpits in these days. Of course a disputatious preacher

plaint: "There is a great deficiency of what may be called conclusive writing and speaking. How seldom we feel at the end of the passage or discourse that something is settled and done."—*Pattison, "Making of the Sermon."*

is a disturber of the peace ; but a preacher who lays down propositions without proof, as if his say-so were final, is as ineffective as a daft Jamie "whistling down the wind."[1]

The term "argument," however, is a broad one. There are four kinds of composition which may properly be called argumentative ; it being understood that all argument, as an effort to persuade, makes its final appeal to the will.

First, Description. This has to do, particularly, with men and things. It addresses itself, through the imagination, to the will.

A description may be for the purpose of mere definition and identification, like that of a piece of property in a title deed ; or like the description of a criminal at large ; or as when a natural scientist describes a skylark as "a bird of singular habits and appearance, that mounts into the air and sings as it flies."

Or the purpose of a description may be to produce or

[1] The uses of argumentation generally speaking are three, as follows : (1) Its most important use is to strengthen the faith of those who already believe. There are very many whose faith is of such a character that they cry in their deepest souls, if not in the hearing of others, "Lord, I believe : help Thou mine unbelief." (2) Argumentation has its uses in the convicting and convincing of unbelievers. But the unbelievers who are won by argument of a formal kind are not generally those who are decidedly hostile to the truth, so that we do not mean by the term those who are arrayed against Christianity, but rather those who yet lack the decision to accept and serve the Lord Christ. They are on the border line ; they are "not far from the kingdom of God." (3) But argumentation has a third use ; it may silence those whom it may not convince. The apostle himself wrote of some whom even he was unable to win, "whose mouths must be stopped." This process requires special skill, but skill that may be acquired by diligent preparation.—*Breed, "Preparing to Preach."*

emphasize a moral impression. When, for example, the preacher paints a man, a place, an incident or anything else, he does so not for the sake of the picture—which has of itself no homiletic value,—but because of its bearing on the object aimed at.

Second, *Narration.* This has to do with events. It addresses itself, through the power of association, to the will.

In Edmund Burke's address in the case of Warren Hastings he relied for the most part on the story of Hastings' life in India to substantiate the indictment. In the preliminary cross-examination his abilities as a lawyer were taxed to the utmost in bringing out facts and incidents which, by themselves, had no apparent connection with the matter in hand. In his address to the court his oratorical ability was splendidly shown in so articulating these *disjecta membra* as to make the story assume the form and power of a convincing argument.

The logical effectiveness of a well-told story is illustrated in the bearing of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on the final solution of the slavery question in the United States.

The story of an overworked and underpaid needlewoman as told by Thomas Hood in "The Song of the Shirt" is in evidence:

"Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread.

* * * * * *

"O men with sisters dear,
O men with mothers and wives,
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!"

This song is said to have raised the wages of every seamstress in England. It is this sort of argument that strikes home.

The consummate oratorical skill of Christ is shown in His use of the parable as a means of influencing the will in the direction of truth and righteousness.

Third, Explanation. This has to do especially with facts. It addresses itself, through the understanding, to the will.

For example: the determining factor in the question of papal supremacy is found in a clear and fair explanation of Christ's words in Matthew xvi. 16–19, xviii. 15–18 and John xx. 19–23. These have reference to (1) the Rock foundation of the Church, which is not Peter, but Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xviii. 15–18);[1] (2) the Power of the Keys, which were not the keys of the invisible but of the visible Church, the reference being to the opening up of the Gospel to Gentiles as well as Jews (Matt. xvi. 19, first clause); (3) the power of "Binding and Loosing," which has reference to the maintenance of order and discipline in the Church, and was conferred not on Peter alone but on the whole apostolic circle (Matt. xvi. 19, latter part); and (4) the Power of Absolution

[1] Our reasons for saying that the Rock here referred to was not Peter but his great confession are these: (1) The word *petran* is feminine; while *petros* is masculine, meaning not a rock but a stone hewn out of a rock. (2) As a matter of historical fact not Peter but Christ Himself is "the Church's one foundation." (3) Of all the apostles Peter was most impulsive and vacillating and, therefore, least fitted to serve in this way. (4) His confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" furnished a worthy foundation for a perpetual Church. (5) It was meet and proper that the man making this confession should be honoured as a stone hewn out of the Rock.

(John xx. 19–23), which was conferred not upon Peter alone but upon all Christians; having no reference whatever to what is called "plenary absolution" but only to that declarative form of absolution which is exercised by all true believers when they say, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not, . . . the wrath of God abideth on him." In a discourse on Romanism along these lines the logic of the argument is found simply in a fair statement or explanation of the teaching of Christ.

A good illustration of the force of explanation is found in Rev. Robert Burdette's statement of his position on the temperance question. A previous utterance of his having been misunderstood, he now proposed to explain it. "About the power of prohibitory laws to prohibit? The laws of the state against murder do not entirely prevent murder; nevertheless, I am opposed to licensing one murderer to ever so many thousand persons, even on petition of a majority of the property-owners in the block that we may have all the murder that is desirable in the community under wise regulations, with a little income for the municipality. I believe in the absolute prohibition of murder. The laws of the country prohibiting stealing do not entirely prevent stealing: nevertheless, I am opposed to a high license system of stealing, providing that all theft shall be restricted to certain authorized thieves who shall steal only between the hours of 6 A. M. and 11 : 30 P. M., except Sundays when no stealing shall be done except by stealth, entrance to be made in all cases on that day by the back door, and at the thief's risk. I believe in laws that absolutely forbid theft at any hour, or on any day of the week. And on the same ground, and just

as positively, do I believe in the prohibition of the liquor traffic. And I never said I didn't. And I did say that I did. And I do. I say that the best way to make a man a temperate man is to teach him not to drink. But a saloon is not a kindergarten of sobriety. Your town is under no obligation to any saloon. All that it is, in respectability and permanent prosperity, it has grown to be without the assistance of the liquor traffic. If the liquor men insist on quoting me on this topic, let them commit this to memory, that they may repeat it as they need it: I do not know one good thing about the saloon. It is an evil thing that has not one redeeming thing in all its history to commend it to good men. It breaks the laws of God and man. It desecrates the Sabbath; it profanes the name of religion; it defies public order; it tramples under foot the tenderest feelings of humanity; it is a moral pestilence that blights the very atmosphere of town and country; it is a stain upon honesty; a blur upon purity; a clog upon progress; a check upon the nobler impulses; it is an incentive to falsehood, deceit and crime. Search through the history of this hateful thing, and read one page over which some mother can bow her grateful head and thank God for all the saloon did for her boy. There is no such record. All its history is written in tears and blood, with smears of shame and stains of crime, and dark blots of disgrace."

Fourth, Demonstration. This is after the method of Euclid. It addresses itself through all the mental powers to the will.[1]

[1] It cost Abraham Lincoln a long struggle to understand what constitutes proof; and in order to master the principles of reasoning he left the law office where he was reading, and

1. A demonstration may be direct: following either the inductive or deductive method; as explained further on.

2. Or the demonstration may be indirect. As in a mathematical proposition like this: "If two straight lines are perpendicular to the same straight line they are parallel with each other"; where it is shown that if they were not thus parallel they would meet; an absurd conclusion, because it violates certain of the axioms and definitions.

This indirect method is called *reductio ad absurdum.* It was used by Whately, when, in refuting a current form of argument against Christ, he showed that the same mode of reasoning would prove that no such person as Napoleon ever lived.

The extreme view of evolution, which not only excludes all divine interposition in the province of natural law but applies the theory rigidly and without exception to every department of human life and experience, is conclusively met, from the Christian standpoint, by a clear showing of the fact that, ruling out the miraculous, it makes not only Christianity but Christ Himself the mere product of the automatic processes of insensate laws.

(B) THE REQUISITES OF A CONVINCING ARGUMENT

The object of argument in preaching, to wit: per-

through a cheerless winter spelled out his geometry by the light of pitch-pine knots in his father's log hut. "Then in the spring, when I had got through with it, I said to myself one day, 'Abe, do you know now when a thing is proved?' And I answered right out loud, 'Yes, sir, I do.' 'Then you may go back to the law shop.' And I went."—*Pattison, "Making of the Sermon."*

suasion, must constantly be kept in mind. To the end that, by a convincing appeal to the will, through all the avenues of mental approach, the hearer may be moved to action, four things are necessary:

First, A Theme, in and about which, for the time, all consideration shall centre. Unity is essential to effectiveness. One reason why expository preaching, which is ideally most effective, is so frequently dull and inconsequential, is because it lacks oneness of aim, like sheet lightning. A sermon may be full of beautiful thoughts and forcible suggestions without getting anywhere in particular. One large thought, well presented from various points of view, sufficiently illustrated, argued to a finish and practically driven home, is better than the best pyrotechnical display of rhetoric. Napoleon was accustomed to say, "One bad general is better than two good ones." Wherefore, stick to your text.

Second, A Proposition. It is the proposition that distinguishes a sermon from a religious essay. In the proposition, which is not always announced to the congregation but is necessarily present to the preacher's mind, the preacher lays down, more definitely than in his theme, what he proposes to do.

In Edmund Burke's great defense of the American Colonies he began by announcing his purpose on this wise: "When Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in the year 1766 I affirm *first* that the Americans did not, in consequence of this measure, call upon you to give up the former parliamentary revenue which subsisted in that country, or even any one of the articles which compose it. I affirm also that when, departing from the maxims of that repeal, you revived the schemes of taxation, and thereby filled the minds of the colonists

with new jealousy and all sorts of apprehension, then it was that they quarrelled with the old taxes as well as the new; then it was, and not until then, that they questioned all the parts of your legislative power and by the battery of such questions have shaken the solid structure of this empire to its deepest foundations. Of these two *propositions* I shall, before I have done, give such convincing, such damning proof, that however the contrary may be whispered in circles or bawled in newspapers, they nevermore will dare to raise their voice in this house."

Now and then a thoughtless critic of doctrinal discussion smiles at the fact that men once adventured their lives on the importance of the word *Filioque*, or on the single letter of the alphabet which marks the difference between *homoousian* and *homoiousian;* but this is because they are unappreciative of the great truths involved in those historic debates. The word *Filioque* was the caption of a great proposition, to wit: that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son," a statement which rent asunder the Western and Eastern Churches. The letter which differentiates the words *homoousian* and *homoiousian* was a mighty platform for debate, because it expressed the proposition of the Trinity; and in the prolonged controversies of which it furnished the basis the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was finally and permanently formulated in the symbols of the Christian Church.[1]

[1] This memorable dispute was satirized by Boileau on this wise:

"D'une syllabe impie un saint mot augmenté
Remplit tous les esprits d'aigreurs si meurtrières—
Tu fis, dans une guerre et si triste et si longue,
Périr tant de Chrétiens, *martyrs d'une dipthongue!*"

Third, Forceful Logic. The preacher should be a master of the art of putting things; his sermon should be like a well-ordered and mobilized army of facts. To carry one's point—that is the business in hand. And certain things are necessary to this end.

1. Concreteness. In a famous mill-wheel case, in which Rufus Choate and Daniel Webster were the attorneys of the respective litigants, the former delivered a long and elaborate speech in which he argued that his client's patent had been infringed, basing his argument on a scientific principle known as "the fixity of points." Webster replied by producing two wheels and saying, "Gentlemen of the jury: there they are. Look at them!" It was a brief argument but it carried his case.

2. Concentration. George Whitefield once wrote to Benjamin Franklin that he was on his way to Philadelphia where he proposed to preach a sermon in behalf of his orphanage in Georgia. "Of course I must hear him," said Franklin, "but I don't believe in his orphanage; and I defy him to get any money from me." In speaking of the sermon afterwards he said that from the opening sentence it was nothing but orphans and the orphanage; facts, figures, pathetic incidents were all directed to a single end; so that presently Franklin said, "I will give him a few pence," then, "He shall have my loose silver"; and he ended by making a generous donation.

3. Clearness. "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

The best writers are not infrequently careless in this particular. A few quotations in point:

Captain Marryat: "I must go and help Alice with

the heifer; she is not very quiet, and I see her going out with her pail."

Encyclopedia Britannica: "Richard Steele's father, who is said to have been a lawyer, died before he had reached his sixth year."

Henry Maudesley: "At length, worn out by annoyance, he resolved to end it. He awaited the night of December 31st, pistol in hand, and as the clock struck twelve, fired it into his mouth."

Dickens in Martin Chuzzlewit: "The present business of these pages is with the dragon who had his retreat in Mr. Pecksniff's neighbourhood; and that courteous animal being already on the carpet, there is nothing in the way of its immediate transaction."[1]

4. Graceful rhetoric. There is no reason why a man competent to preach a good sermon should not express it in the best possible form.

The carelessness of a preacher in so simple a matter as the discriminating use of the words "shall," usually indicating futurity, and "will" correctly denoting volition, may prevent the full effect of his sermon upon the minds of some hearers by stamping him as a slightly educated man.[2]

[1] See Hill's "Principles of Rhetoric" for these and other instances of common faults.

[2] The general rule to be followed in the use of the two words is, that when the simple idea of future occurrence is to be expressed, unconnected with the speaker's resolve, we must use *shall* in the first person, and *will* in the second and third; as "I shall die, you will die, he will die"; but when the idea of compulsion or necessity is to be conveyed,—a futurity connected with the will of the speaker,—*will* must be employed in the first person, and *shall* in the second and third; as, "I will go, you shall go, he shall go."—*Matthews, "Words, Their Use and Abuse."*

In Franklin's boyhood, feeling the inadequacy of his preparation for the best literary work by reason of his ignorance of good rhetoric, he bought an odd volume of *The Spectator* and, after reading its essays carefully, tried first to reproduce them in prose as nearly equal to the original as possible, then changed them into verse, then back into prose again; until by persistence in this and similar exercises he made himself a master of clear and graceful expression.

5. The attaining of these four qualities demands great industry. It is only by earnest work and suitable preparation that a theme can be elucidated. "By hammer and hand all arts do stand."

N. B. There are some text-books which, until the preacher has mastered them, should be kept near at hand. He should familiarize himself particularly with these:

(1) The principles of logic; too much overlooked and neglected by the pulpit in these days.

(2) The laws of evidence. A minister ought to know, almost as well as he knows the faces of his church-members, the various kinds of proof and the relative values of evidence, testimonial, circumstantial, *et cetera.* He ought to know precisely the weight of authority and the worthlessness of mere assertion. If he is arguing against the theatre, for example, he should be able to discriminate between the *ipse dixit* of a theological recluse and the testimony of a man like Edwin Booth who knew about it.

(3) The rules of rhetoric. It is a mistake to part with the rudimentary text-books of one's early school-days. The old grammar, thumbed and dog-eared, should be kept near by for reference; because we know

that better than any other, and, in a matter of doubt, can turn immediately to the proper page of it.

We never grow away from these fundamental things. The plays of Shakespeare are simply superb combinations of the letters of the alphabet in accord with sensible rules of grammar and rhetoric. Not even in our religious life do we "leave the rudiments of the Gospel" in the sense of forsaking or ignoring them: we "leave" them only as a brook leaves the fountain on its way to the sea or as a temple leaves its foundation by rising higher, stone by stone, upon it.

(C) POSITIVE PROOF, OR DEMONSTRATION

1. The Antecedent Probability.

In framing an argument the first business of the logician is to create an antecedent probability as to the truth of his proposition. This places him in a coign of vantage by throwing the *onus probandi* on the other side.

In a case before a criminal court the attorney for the prosecution usually tries, at the outset, to create such an antecedent probability, with reference to the guilt of the prisoner at the bar, by showing that he had a motive for committing the crime charged against him.

This mode of procedure is familiar in connection with scientific research. The discovery of the planet Neptune in 1846 by Le Verrier was due to the fact that perturbations were observed in a certain quarter of the heavens, which could only be accounted for on the hypothesis that some unknown body was disconcerting the otherwise normal order of things. Having this probability in mind Le Verrier kept his telescope

patiently turned in that direction, with the result referred to.

To cite another instance: the fact that chemical nitrogen is lighter than atmospheric nitrogen forced upon the minds of scientific chemists the presumption that the latter contained an unknown ponderable constituent. This antecedent probability led to a systematic quest which was rewarded by the discovery of the new element known as argon.

It need scarcely be said that such a presumption has not of itself the value of proof. It creates an hypothesis which is favourable to the subsequent argument, but nothing more.

The vast array of facts adduced by Darwin in the interest of his theory of development was sufficient to create a strong hypothesis in its favour; but, as Darwin himself—a man more logical than many of his less scientific disciples—was frank to admit, it awaited demonstration. And it still awaits it. No amount of "progressive approach" can make us citizens of the Metropolis of Truth until by a definite *ergo* we enter its gates.

The familiar theory of the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare is an illustration in point. The argument from a cypher laboriously traced through the plays and poems is strong enough to create a presumption; but when that presumption is subjected to the acid test of historic fact, it goes to pieces. A recent reviewer says, "What the Baconians ask us to credit is that a man, whose conception of love, of beauty and of friendship found—as his whole character and career as well as the rest of his writings prove—exact expression in his essays on those subjects and in his 'Essay on Marriage and

Single Life,' was the author of 'Venus and Adonis,' of the Sonnets, of Romeo and Juliet, and was the delineator of Viola, of Portia, of Rosalind, of Hermione, of Imogen; that a man without a spark of genial humour was the creator of the 'Merry Wives,' of Falstaff, of Mercutio, of Touchstone, and of Dogberry; that a writer in whose works there is no trace of any dramatic imagination, of any light play of wit and fancy, of any profound passion, of any esthetic enthusiasm transformed himself into the poet of the marvellous dramas in which all these qualities are essential and predominating characteristics; that the master of a style, the notes of which—in colour, in tone, in rhythm—are unmistakable, became at will the master of a style in which not one of these notes is, even in the faintest degree, discernible; and lastly, that a man should by the very poetry of which he acknowledged himself the composer refute all possibility of his being equal to the composition of poetry to which he never made any claim." It thus appears that, while a well established antecedent probability is a strong help to the argument, if loosely or unadvisedly constructed it works just the other way.

A sermon on the Atonement might properly begin with (*a*) a clear statement of the probability that if there is a God anywhere in the universe, and if that God is our Father, He would surely not leave His children in their sore extremity without making an effort of some sort to deliver them from the power of sin. This would naturally be followed by a statement of (*b*) the fact that this effort would probably be put forth in accord with the demands of the moral law. (*c*) Then, as this involves the necessity of expiation for sin, the vicarious sacrifice follows almost as a matter

of course; since it is just what should be expected of God. The establishment of this antecedent probability clears the way, in this manner, for the sermon proper; which would be an argument to show that God has done this very thing, for the purpose of saving all who are prepared to abandon the thought of self-salvation and to accept, by faith, the benefits conferred in this divine plan.

2. *The Positive Demonstration;* which consists of three things.

(1) Proof. This is aimed at the understanding. It is a mathematical process. It welds a chain of reasoning, link by link, and then with an *ergo*, like a final clamp, fastens the auditor to the proposition beyond the possibility of reasonable resistance.

But this is not enough; a man convinced is not necessarily persuaded. He must be led on to do something about it.

(2) There must be illustration. This is by no means for the mere sake of rhetorical ornamentation. By making logic vivid, through an appeal to the imagination, it emphasizes and enforces it. The statement that Christ "tasted death for every man" is capable of cold demonstration by arguments based on evidence; but when the preacher brings his congregation to Calvary and holds them there long enough to make them see the awful tragedy and feel as if the very blood of the atonement were falling upon them, while the hearer is musing the fire burns, "the eye affecteth the heart" and produces a personal interest in the matter; and he presently begins to feel as Luther did when he was found standing before a crucifix in his monastic cell at Erfurt, weeping and repeating, "Für mich! Für mich!"

(3) The last step is persuasion. By this is meant a personal appeal, through the emotions, to the will. This is the clinching of the argument; and the business of the man in the pulpit is not finished without it.

"Come to Jesus" is sometimes criticized as a hackneyed phrase. It may be true that the formula has been overworked; but the exhortation which it stands for is after the fashion set by Christ and His apostles, and it will continue to be used so long as it remains true that the heart furnishes an avenue to purpose and leads to action. There is a point in every argument where Philip can best influence Nathanael by foregoing the further use of the syllogism and saying simply, "Come and see."

3. Kinds of Positive Proof or Demonstration.

To "make one's point" in argument is never an easy matter. Certainly it is not so in the province of religion where the preacher meets a singular prejudice, due primarily to the fact that the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is wise, therefore, to know the implements of our trade and be able, on occasion, to use not only the best but, if necessary, more than one.

(A) *Deduction.* This, in simple terms, is reasoning from the general to the specific, or from laws to facts.

Its simplest form is the syllogism; in which one or more premises lead to a definite *ergo* or conclusion. To use a time honoured example:

First premise: All men are mortal.

Second premise: Socrates is a man.

Conclusion: Socrates is mortal.

The syllogism need not be stated in conventional terms. Much of our average conversation is syllogistic in fact though not in form. Not infrequently the

colloquial syllogism is lame, one or more of its premises being omitted as self-evident or for some other reason unnecessary; in which case the syllogism is technically called an *enthymeme*. For example, "Polo is a dangerous game, wherefore it is better not to play it." If this enthymeme were filled out it would stand thus:

First premise: It is imprudent to indulge in dangerous sports.

Second premise: Polo is a dangerous game.

Ergo: It is not wise to play it.

(B) *Induction*. This is the reverse of the deductive method. It reasons from the specific to the general, or from facts to laws. It is sometimes called the "Baconian method"; though it is as old as Adam, who used it when he said, "I heard thy Voice in the garden; and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

This is the method employed in the argument for the theory of evolution. A great number of facts is adduced, showing the resemblance of one order of life to the next in sequence; seeming to indicate that each of the series is evolved from the one preceding it, and leading on presumably to the conclusion that, by the calm operation of natural laws, without any interposition from any quarter whatsoever, all things in the visible universe have been evolved from a single primordial germ. Thus the argument proceeds from specific facts to a universal law. The facts in the premises are not questioned; the only doubt is with reference to the conclusion. Does the *ergo* hold? There's the rub.

The same method is used for the most part in Paley's "Evidences." He found no difficulty in adducing numberless illustrations of design in nature; since

everything from the shining sun to the nightingale's throat is obviously adapted to its uses. The argument if expressed syllogistically would stand thus:

First premise: All things in nature are adjusted to their uses.

Second premise: Design necessitates a designer.

Therefore, there must be a personal God.

It is the fashion of our time to cry down deduction and insist on the Baconian method. In point of fact, neither is mathematically effective.[1] There is no such thing as mathematical proof in the province of religion. Here, in the necessity of the case, inasmuch as the point to be proven lies beyond the circumscription of the physical senses, the final appeal is to authority. No religious fact can be incontrovertibly established without a "Thus saith the Lord." The man who, "being in torment" for the sins of a self-centred life, entreated that a messenger might be sent from the unseen world to admonish his five brethren lest they should suffer a similar fate, was corrected thus, "If they believe not Moses and the Prophets (*i. e.*, the Scriptures) neither would they believe though one rose from the dead." Thus did Christ emphasize the fact that divine authority,

[1] Induction adds to our knowledge; but the knowledge so added is to a certain extent guesswork, for it rests on the supposition that what is true of all known members of a class is true of all unknown members of the same class. . . . Thus it has been asserted that animals which ruminate have cloven hoofs; but science has not discovered a connection between rumination and cloven hoofs. If a new ruminant should be found, one might infer that it would have cloven hoofs; but in the absence of knowledge of a casual connection, and in face of the fact that some animals with cloven hoofs (pigs and tapirs, for example) are not ruminants, such an inference would have little force.—*Hill, "Principles of Rhetoric."*

as expressed in the Scriptures, is the court of final resort in spiritual things.

(C) *A Priori.* This is reasoning from cause to effect.

It is the fashion, in these days, to minimize the *a priori* method for two reasons:

First, because it involves a presumption at the outset. As when one says, "If there be a God, a first cause of everything, then Providence, in all its minutest details and particulars, follows as a matter of course."

The fact stated in the objection is indisputable; but as an objection it is urged too far: since, were there no axioms or postulates assumed in our average reasoning, or if all causes had to be demonstrated before being used as premises, we should find ourselves at our wit's end. No man would be at liberty to claim his own birthright until he had produced the marriage certificate of his great-great-grandparents. And much the largest part of all literature would have to be committed to the waste basket, because no author, or scarcely any, has presumed to go back of the postulates of thought, such as self-consciousness, or has claimed to demonstrate the original cause or origin of things.

The second objection to the *a priori* method is that it does not prove. If by proof is meant mathematical demonstration the point is conceded; but it must be remembered that no proposition in the spiritual world can be established by what is commonly called "the scientific method," that is, by the evidence of the physical senses. It is for this reason that man is endowed with a sixth or spiritual sense, namely, faith; by which he discerns the things that lie outside the scope of physical vision and beyond the circumscription of the

finger tips. It is as unreasonable for a man to expect to demonstrate a religious truth by the processes used in physical science as it would be to insist on seeing with his ears or hearing with his eyes. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." The telescope proves the existence of the planet Mars by enabling us to see it; but the telescope has yet to be invented which can make heaven a demonstrated fact to the soul of a man.

(D) *A Posteriori.* This is the reverse of the foregoing, *i. e.*, reasoning from effect to cause.

As Napoleon was pacing the deck of his flag-ship on the Nile on a starlit night he heard a group of his subordinates discussing theology and calling in question the being of God. As he was passing he paused and pointing upward said, "But, gentlemen, who made those?" This was reasoning from effect to cause; and this is the method pursued by all who "look through nature up to nature's God."

An Arab, camping in the desert, on being challenged to prove the existence of God, pointed to a line of camel-tracks in the sand and made this answer, "How do I know that last night a camel passed this way?"

But too much must not be claimed for this method. It is conclusively effective in such problems as are capable of solution by the evidence of the physical senses; but it cannot "prove" the things which are "unseen and eternal." The facts are plain enough; the premises are conceded; but the *ergo*, the conclusion, is lame and impotent for all such as deny the reality of the supernatural. And, we repeat, controversialists in this province are always handicapped by the fact that "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

A Scotch lad who had run away to sea returned,

after a while, with many unbelievable tales of adventure. "We sailed and we sailed," said he to his mother, "until we came to the Red Sea; and there we saw along the shore some of the wheels of Pharaoh's chariots. And we sailed on into the open again, where fish, with wings like birds, went flying across our decks, and ——" "My son," interrupted his canny auditor, "I ken weel aboot Pharaoh's chariot-wheels; but as to your fleein' fish, ye maunna be trying to fash your auld mither wi' sic awfu' lees!" *Haec fabula docet:* the average man is credulous enough in most matters but a sceptic with reference to the most real and credible things.

(E) *The argument from analogy.* This makes its appeal through an association of ideas. It has never been more effectively used than by Bishop Butler, whose "Analogy," after long occupying an honourable place in the curriculum of most colleges, has been supplanted in some cases by Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," a more gracefully worded volume but much feebler as an exponent of this historic method of persuasion.

While the argument from analogy falls short of proof, it is more than illustration. It is illustration with an inferential *ergo.*[1]

For example: suppose an argument on Immortality is being urged through the well established principle known as the Conservation of Force. In accordance with this principle, energy being a constant factor in the problem of the universe, no slightest portion of it is ever lost or annihilated. A current of electricity, when driven along a wire to a point where the wire is

[1] For an effective argument of this sort read 1 Cor. xv. 35–44.

too small to transmit it, is not dissipated but thrown off in the form of light. So the power used by a blacksmith in swinging his hammer is not wasted but transformed, as it passes from his arm, into another form of force produced by the atomic friction of his anvil. By this law the physical energy in John Milton's biceps muscle must be regarded as indestructible. But what of the energy of the mighty brain that produced "Paradise Lost" and "Areopagitica"? Shall that be blotted out or cease to be?[1]

Or suppose one's theme is The Atonement, and he is endeavouring to meet the usual objection that the innocent cannot suffer for the guilty. It is an easy matter to show that the innocent are always and everywhere suffering for the guilty: kings for their unruly subjects, parents for their wayward children. A pang of rheumatism in one's knee may be due not to any personal violation of the laws of health but to the fact that one's great-grandfather once sat in a draught. Vicarious pain is the commonest thing in human experience.

[1] Professor Hill, in his "Principles of Rhetoric," gives the following illustration of the analogical method: We may observe a very great similitude between this earth which we inhabit, and the other planets, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury. They all revolve round the sun, as the earth does, although at different distances and in different periods. They borrow all their light from the sun, as the earth does. Several of them are known to revolve round their axis like the earth, and by that means have like succession of day and night. Some of them have moons, that serve to give them light in the absence of the sun, as our moon does to us. They are all, in their motions, subject to the same law of gravitation as the earth is. From all this similitude it is not unreasonable to think that these planets may, like our earth, be the habitation of various orders of living creatures.

It runs along the double line of heredity and environment. When it is voluntary its other name is sympathy; and in sympathy our human nature reaches its highest and best. The man who most joyously wills to spend and be spent for others is the very best of men. But men are created in the likeness of God. He is our Father. Would it not, *ergo*, be expected that God would somehow express this sympathy, this voluntary vicariousness of suffering, in some manner most human, most divine, most glorious? Would it not be monstrous in Him as a Father did He fail somehow to express it? Such an expression is found in the tragedy of the Cross. Here He "tastes death for every man." This is precisely what, by analogy, we should expect of our Father. It is just like God.

But, as said before, the analogical process is not proof. Indeed, what is? Proof is a matter not merely of forcible approach but of an open gate. Therefore, analogy fails most of all. The French engineer De Lesseps, having learned that Rameses II had built a canal from Bubastes to the Red Sea, concluded that it was possible to build a similar canal across the Isthmus of Suez. Thus far the argument held good. But when he proceeded to analogize further by undertaking a like enterprise at Panama, he failed. His failure, however, struck the key-note of success further on.

(F) *A Fortiori: i. e.*, from the less to the greater. This form of argument is of frequent occurrence in the teaching of Christ, who used it with singular skill. For example, "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of

you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not *much more* clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 26–33).

Also, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asked receiveth, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how *much more* shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt. vii. 7–11).

In many of Christ's parables we have remarkable illustrations of the effectiveness of this method. For example, "And He spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, and regarded not man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge

me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him day and night, and yet He is long-suffering over them? I say unto you, that He will avenge them speedily. Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 1–8. Also the parables in Luke xv., and in Luke xvi. 1–8, xix. 12–27, etc.).

Paul, the greatest dialectician of his time, was a master of this *a fortiori* or "much more" method. See, for example, in 1 Corinthians ix. 7–12: "What soldier ever serveth at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Do I speak these things after the manner of men? Or saith not the law also the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith He it altogether for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written: because he that ploweth ought to plow in hope, and he that thresheth, to thresh in hope of partaking. If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things? If others partake of this right over you, do not we *yet more?* Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the Gospel of Christ."

See also Romans viii. 28–39, where we have a complex argument of this character which could scarcely

be surpassed. Observe its successive steps, interwelded like an anchor-chain.

The proposition is expressed in the form of an interrogation: "What shall we then say to these things?"

First link: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Second link: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

Third link: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

Fourth link: "Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died."

Fifth link: "Who is at the right hand of God."

Sixth link: "Who also maketh intercession for us."

Conclusion: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(G) *The argument from testimony.* This is the usual method of courts of justice and is generally regarded as most effective. But discrimination is necessary.

(*a*) The testimony of prejudiced friends is received *cum grano salis.* It is for this reason that many are

disposed to discredit the statements made by the four evangelists as to the nature, life, character and redeeming work of Christ. They were, indeed, friends of His and in a sense prejudiced; so that, if their testimony stood alone, on its own merits, the result might be a Scotch verdict; but considering the fact that they speak by divine inspiration, and as their statements are abundantly verified by other evidence, the case is as nearly demonstrated as would be possible to the minds of reasonable men.

(*b*) The case is strengthened when it can be shown that the witnesses are of good character. To impugn the character of a witness in a court of justice is the usual way of weakening or invalidating his testimony. Of some men it can be said that their word is as good as their bond, while others "cannot be believed on oath."

(*c*) It is a matter of importance that the deponents should have been eye-witnesses of the things affirmed. Hearsay goes for little. The men in the jury box want to hear from those who can say like the aged John: "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled declare we unto you"; or like Peter, when recalling the scene in the Mount of Transfiguration: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of His majesty. (The reference here is to His transfiguration.) For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice we ourselves heard

come out of heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

(*d*) There is special value in the testimony of "experts." Professor Sayce, *e. g.*, gets a hearing when he testifies as an archæologist to the proper interpretation of certain inscriptions on the monuments. And when Greenleaf, a standing authority on the value of evidence, says that the miracle of Christ's resurrection is as well verified as should be expected in any court of justice, his statement carries great weight with it.[1]

(*e*) There is a special value in the unwitting and often unwilling testimony of hostile witnesses.[2] For example, in an argument to show the Divine Character and Godhood of Jesus there are three witnesses whose evidence cannot be left out: (a) The man who betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. He flung down the blood-money with the cry: "I have betrayed innocent blood!" (b) The judge who sentenced Him to death. He placed Him in the judgment seat at Gabbatha and said to the howling mob, "Take ye Him and

[1] It is, however, to be noted that the value of the testimony of an expert may be impaired by the fact that he is an expert. A specialist is in danger of seeing things through the distorting glasses of a theory, of looking at them from a professional rather than from a common-sense point of view, and sometimes, it is to be feared, of unfairly judging the work of a rival. Both the value of expert testimony and the risk attending it are shown by the fact that whenever such testimony is introduced,—whether the question relates to a prisoner's sanity, to the authorship of a letter, or to the infringement of a patent,—experts are usually called to support each side of the question.—*Hill, "Principles of Rhetoric."*

[2] The student is advised to read, for a fine illustration of this mode of argument, Schaff's "Person of Christ," in which the testimony of many hostile witnesses is given to His perfect life and character.

crucify Him. I find no fault in Him at all." (c) The centurion who had charge of His execution. On beholding the patient fortitude of the victim on the Cross he said: "Verily, this was a righteous man," and later on, "Verily, this was the Son of God!"

But all evidence whatsoever must be carefully sifted and offered at its just value. A case in point is that of five scientific savants who recently took it upon themselves to weigh the imponderable soul. They placed a number of moribund paupers in scales; and, finding that there was a slight difference between their weight immediately before and after dissolution, they announced the fact that the soul weighs about one ounce. One ounce of vital spirit, escaping *in articulo mortis* like an expiration of air from the body of a man! Of course this would be regarded as important if true; but when the standing of the "scientists" and the validity of their testimony was examined it was easily made to appear that there was nothing in it.

(H) *The argument from tradition.* It cannot be claimed that a thing is to be cherished beyond all possibility of displacement for no other reason than because our forbears believed it; but common sense suggests that the old should remain until something is found that can better answer its uses.

The argument from tradition rests on the familiar postulate that the presumption is always in favour of the *status quo.* A thoughtful man holds himself ever in readiness to renounce falsehood and adopt truth; but even the dull farmer of Egypt will not throw away the crooked stick which he calls a plow until he has found a better implement for stirring the soil. Thus are the children of this world wiser than those philos-

ophers who, deeming themselves children of light, are prone to throw away their lanterns long before the break of day.

In the dark period of the Encyclopedia in France, Lord Chesterfield, while being entertained at the table of a learned infidel, was asked by his hostess: "How is it that, in this age of progress, the religion of the crucified Nazarene is still cherished by your enlightened nation as its established faith; and that, too, with the full consent of a Parliament made up of supposedly sensible and learned men?" To which he replied apologetically, "It is, madam, a mere temporary makeshift and a tribute to the past. We mean to better ourselves as soon as possible; and, I assure you, we are at this moment casting about for a better religion with which to supplant it." That was a long time ago; and men like Chesterfield have been constantly casting about for a substitute; but they have not found it. Thus we persist in the religion of our fathers, and quite justly, until it is shown to be false, inadequate or less useful than some other.

> "Oh, that old time religion;
> It is good enough for me."

Nevertheless it is an easy matter to push this form of argument too far. A man of lazy mental habits will prefer to move in "the outworn rite," as a dull wagoner keeps to the ruts of the turnpike rather than seek a better way. It is the business of the preacher to preserve the old landmarks in so far as they make for the perpetual rights of property in truth, but no further. He is a wise scribe who, "like an householder, bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old"; but al-

ways "out of his treasure," that is, the Scriptures, which in the beginning were divinely adjusted to the progress of the ages. The word of John Robinson at Delft Haven was well spoken, "There will be ever new truths bursting forth from the Word of God."

(I) *The argument from experience.* This is perhaps the least effective of all modes of reasoning used in public address.

The blind man in the ninth of John had what he thought the best evidence in the world as to the genuineness of the miracle wrought upon himself, to wit: "Whereas I was blind, now I see"; but this had so little power to convince his religious superiors that they cast him out of the synagogue.

The trustworthiness of God was to the mind of David a fact demonstrated by past providences; so that, when his faith was shaken, he had but to say, "I will remember thee from Jordan, from the hill Mizar and the land of the Hermonites"; nevertheless the comparatively slight value of this deposition is evident not merely in the fact that many of David's contemporaries were unmoved by it, but in the effort of "reverent criticism" in our time, to explain away both the Davidic authorship of the saying and the devout inference from it.

The preacher may and should, on occasion, certify to his own experiential knowledge of God and the truths which centre in Him; yet always with becoming modesty and a due recognition of the fact that what seems incontrovertibly convincing to him may be but an idle tale to others. "Seeing is believing"; and every one must see for himself. There is room for "testimonies" in other places than in Methodist "class

meetings"; but when Paul tells the story of the sunburst on the way to Damascus he must not be surprised if his auditors lift their eyebrows and say, "The man is beside himself."

(J) *The argument from the consensus.* The fact, so frequently observed, that there is no tribe or nation without a sense of Deity,—evidenced in the universality of shrines, altars and sanctuaries,—is a weighty factor in the discussion as to the divine being. Plutarch says: "If we traverse the world we shall find people who have no walls nor fleets nor armies, no kings nor legislatures, no theatres nor schools; but a people without a temple was never seen."

The doctrine of Divine Providence is strengthened by the tribute paid to it in the false religions.[1] The fetich-worshipper, bowing before a shark's tooth or a crooked stick as a luck-giver, acknowledges that a Something-not-himself is the arbiter of life and destiny.

The doctrine of immortality is emphasized by reference to the testimony of all nations and generations. Cato: "The soul, secure in its existence, smiles at the drawn dagger and defies its point." Cicero at the tomb of Tullia, watching the light of the sepulchral lamp: "It cannot be, my daughter, that thy life thus flickers and goes out!"

The presumption is greatly in favour of that which is so generally believed as to be almost a generic intui-

[1] With the sole exception of Confucianism; which is properly not a religion at all but a system of social economics. The philosophy of Confucius is briefly comprehended in his statement: "Whether there be a God, I know not; and whether there be any future state, I know not. I only know that we are living here and now and must make the most of it."

tion. Nevertheless this does not close the debate: else *vox populi* would really be *vox Dei.* Common opinion would be final authority in all matters of truth and ethics.

(K) *The argument "by sign."* This is an appeal through the reason to the will by an association of ideas.[1]

A boy in a melon patch is inclined to pluck melons of a certain appearance, because he has learned from frequent observation that melons of that sort are ripe.

A laundress hesitates to hang out her clothing when the barometer is falling, because she has learned by observation that this suggests foul weather. That such reasoning involves no scientific knowledge of the barometer is indicated by the case of the maid-servant who turned the barometer back to "Bright and Fair" because the next day was her day out.

If we take a map of the world and draw a line about the countries called "Christendom" we shall have shut in all light and shut out "the regions of darkness and the shadows of death." This singular association of Evangelization and Civilization does not mathematically prove that they are synonymous terms but it strongly points that way.

[1] We argue from sign when, on seeing the flags flying on Osborne House or on the Capitol at Washington, we infer that the queen is in her mansion or that Congress is in session. We argue from sign when from the fact that ice is forming we infer that the temperature is below freezing point. The traveller argues from sign when, on seeing a guide-board bearing the words "Groton 5 m" and a hand pointing in a certain direction, he infers that if he goes five miles in that direction he shall arrive at a place called Groton.—*Hill, "Principles of Rhetoric."*

(L) *By the evidence of the senses.* This is commonly regarded as the most satisfactory form of argument: in fact, however, it is inconclusive. The physical senses are by no means always to be trusted. The diverse testimony given by credible witnesses in any court of justice shows that one cannot always "believe his own eyes." Any clever sleight-of-hand performer can "pull the wool" over them. One man thinks he hears a gun while to another it is a clap of thunder, and each is prepared to take his oath upon his own impression. The belief in ghosts, sea-serpents and numberless other illusions is due to crooked observation. This is not to say that the seeing of the eyes and hearing of the ears have no evidential value; but that, as they do not furnish the necessary factors for a mathematical demonstration, too much reliance must not be placed upon them.

(M) *Proof by concrete instances:* such as detailed facts and statistics.

The war of the United States against Spain was precipitated by a speech of Senator Thurston's in which he showed that in less than a single year 200,000 Cubans had been taken from their homes and confined in *reconcentrado* camps, of whom not less than 100,000 had died of hunger and exposure. This statement of facts made such an appeal to the instincts of common humanity, in behalf of the little island lying under the shadow of the great Republic, that the necessary appropriation for the conduct of a war of deliverance was immediately made by Congress without a dissenting vote.

But statistics and concrete instances do not always tell a correct story or lead to a just conclusion. It is true that "figures never lie"; yet a clever book-

keeper with an eye to the main chance can change a ledger into a veritable dream-book without difficulty. It is really not the figures that do the lying, but wrong summaries, comparisons and inferences. *E. g.*, Socialists are accustomed to say that all wealth is the product of labour, with abundant figures to prove it. The next step in their argument is expressed in the aphorism of Prudhon, "Property is robbery," and again with figures to prove it. The *ergo* is that wealth should be placed, by hook or by crook, in the hands of the labouring class. It is easy, however, to show by a sufficient array of figures that wealth is not always or only the product of labour, but of labour *plus* thrift, economy, self-confidence, courage and common sense. And it is easy to show by figures that property, so far from being robbery, is usually in the hands where it belongs, because those are the hands that earned it. Thus the bottom falls out of the conclusion, and figures put figures to rout.

(N) *Cumulative argument;* that is, piling up fact on fact in proper order and making one's case by sheer avoirdupois. In this method the skill of the reasoner lies not only in presenting a great array of facts but in marshalling them in progressive and climacteric form.

For example: Twenty reasons for believing the Bible to be the Word of God.

(*a*) There is an antecedent probability of a revelation from God.

(*b*) The Scriptures claim to be such a revelation.

(*c*) Inerrancy. The errors in current versions are such as to suggest that there were no errors in the original as it came from God.

(*d*) Literary character.

(*e*) Unity.

(*f*) Completeness.

(*g*) Freshness. Goethe: "Other books tire me; but not this. The more I read it the newer it seems to me."

(*h*) Antiquity.

(*i*) Indestructability. Bonfires have not consumed it.

(*j*) Propagation. It is the "best seller" in the world to-day.

(*k*) Influence on personal character.

(*l*) Power among the nations. Christendom is the product of it.

(*m*) Code of morals.

(*n*) Doctrines.

(*o*) Science. It furnishes the basis of cosmology, astronomy, geology, anthropology, philology and every other important branch of science.

(*p*) History. The Bible is the one universal history that carries us back to the origin of things.

(*q*) Prophecies.

(*r*) Tone of authority. "Yea and Amen."

(*s*) Adaptation to human wants.

(*t*) Plan of salvation. It points out the only rational way of escaping from the shame, bondage and penalty of sin.

It is not claimed that such an argument makes an end of controversy; that indeed is not to be expected so long as children write in their copy-books: "Many Men of Many Minds"; but it is one good method of persuasion, and on occasion the wise preacher will use it.

(O) *The appeal to authority.* The vital importance of having some court of final appeal in moral questions is scarcely open to discussion. If a tradesman finds it necessary to adjust his yardstick and pound-weight to standards in the patent office at Washington, how much more should thoughtful men be able to weigh and measure their opinions by some authoritative standard of truth.

The Bible is accepted by Christians as their "infallible rule of faith and practice."

There are three possible seats of authority for the adjustment and final settlement of moral problems.

The first is the Bible; which, of course, cannot be regarded as trustworthy unless it is infallible. An Alpine tourist wants a sure-footed guide whose record proves that he knows every path and has made no mistakes in guiding travellers on their way. Our need of authority is not met by a book which is true in spots and can be trusted only in some ways.

The second seat of authority is the Church. The fact that this, also, must be absolutely trustworthy in order to meet the necessities of the case is evidenced by the promulgation of the preposterous bull of papal infallibility. A subsequent papal manifesto as to "Certain Heresies" goes far to show, however, that Romanism gives to the pronouncements of the Church an authority merely coördinate with that of the Scriptures; if, indeed, it does not subordinate the authority of the Church to the ultimate and absolute authority of the Word of God.

The third possible seat of authority is the individual consciousness. This is the final court of the rationalists. The argument of the radical school of thinkers against

all truths involving any phase of the supernatural makes an ultimate stand at the individual consciousness and allows no higher authority. It is clear, however, that authority can be authoritative only up to the measure of its infallibleness. This makes every man his own god and personal opinion the final arbiter in all things.

Wherefore, if there is to be any reliable standard of truth and righteousness the choice lies between an infallible book, an infallible church and an infallible ego. Of the three horns of this trilemma wise Christians choose the first, preferring to make their appeal to the Scriptures as the Word of God.

But the preacher's appeal to authority, on this wise, has its limitations. A Christian presenting to a Moslem an argument based on the authority of the Bible is handicapped by his hearer's loyalty to the Koran. And in using this form of argument before an audience of unbelievers he is simply beating the air; because the Scriptures are mere "literature" to them. Hence the necessity, on the part of the pulpit, of a constant and consistent vindication of the absolute truth and authoritative trustworthiness of the Scriptures as the Word of God.

(D) NEGATIVE PROOF, OR REFUTATION

In preaching it is not always necessary to controvert the arguments of the other side. As a rule, indeed, it is better to present gospel truth in its positive form, trusting in the promise, "My word shall not return unto Me void, but shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

There are times, however, when the preacher is put upon the defensive and is bound to expose the weak-

ness and untrustworthiness of assaults upon his faith. (We are "set for the defense of the Gospel": Phil. i. 16.) On such occasions it is of immense importance that he should so understand the art of refutation as to rout the adversary and make clean work of it.[1]

1. Reductio ad Absurdum.

This, as the term indicates, is the refutation of an argument by showing that it goes beyond the bounds of reason and proves too much.

[1] A good illustration of this method is given in the following brief on the expulsion of the Jews from Russia: from Baker's "Principles of Argumentation."

(A) It is claimed that the expulsion of the Jews is defensible on
  I. Economic and social grounds, for
    (Sub-heads.)
  II. National grounds, because
    (Sub-heads.)

(B) Refutation: the expulsion of the Jews is not defensible on
  I. Economic and social grounds, for
    (Sub-heads.)
  II. National grounds, for
    (Sub-heads.)

General proof:

I. The results of the expulsion of the Jews are injurious to the country, for
  1. Commerce is seriously crippled by it, for
    (Sub-heads.)
  2. The strong and energetic part of the Jewish population is emigrating, etc., etc.

Recapitulation:

Since, then, the expulsion of the Jews from Russia is not defensible on economic, social, or national grounds; and since in its results it is injurious to the country of Russia; and since, furthermore, it offends the moral sense of the civilized world, I conclude that the expulsion of the Jews from Russia is unjustifiable.

A controversialist not infrequently exposes himself to this sort of treatment by pushing his facts too far; like the schoolboy who, when required to furnish an original example in multiplication, presented the following: "If a baby gains ten pounds in the first three months, it will gain forty in a year and, at the age of sixteen, will weigh six hundred and forty pounds." The absurdity of an argument is often as apparent as here; but the point of weakness is not always so obvious.

In Paul's argument for the resurrection in 1 Corinthians xv., we have an instance of refutation by this method: "Now if Christ is preached that He hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable."

It must be observed that Paul was not writing for the benefit of unbelievers who denied the resurrection on philosophic grounds but of Christians who denied or questioned it while professing loyalty to the Gospel. His refutation is therefore perfect and conclusive, since it proves the absurd impossibility of denying the resurrection and still believing in Christ.

The contention of some officers of the United States Army for the sale of liquors in the canteen on the ground that the morale of the army demands it and that discipline cannot be maintained without it is best refuted by the *reductio ad absurdum;* inasmuch as their claim, urged to its logical conclusion, makes our army an army of incorrigible inebriates and the officers themselves a pitiable body of men incompetent to enforce discipline. If their argument proves anything it proves much more than they intended, namely, that a self-respecting Republic needs a different army and a different sort of men to command it.[1]

One of the most effective forms of *reductio ad absurdum* is the *dilemma.*

It is frequently the case that an overzealous advocate puts himself, by assuming a false postulate, into a position where, being unable either to recede or advance, he is easily driven to the wall. As when a judge, presiding in a civil court, required a witness to give a categorical answer to a certain question. "I cannot answer yes or no," remonstrated the witness, "without

[1] Professor Matthews makes an admirable application of the *reductio ad absurdum* as follows: "If miracles disturb or interrupt the established order of things, they do so only in the same way that the will of man continually breaks in upon the order of nature. There is not a day, an hour, or a minute in which man, in his contact with the material world, does not divert its course or give a new direction to its order. The order of nature allows an apple-tree to produce fruit; but man can girdle the tree and prevent it from bearing apples. The order of nature allows a bird to wing its flight from tree to tree; but the sportsman's rifle brings the bird to the dust. Yet, in spite of this, it is asserted that the smallest conceivable intervention, disturbing the fated order of nature, linked as are its parts indissolubly from eternity into one chain, must break up the entire system of the universe!"

some qualification." "Yes, you can," said the judge, "and you must. A categorical answer is always possible." "Will you permit me, your honour, to test that decision?" "Certainly." "Then give me a categorical answer to this question: Have you ceased beating your wife?" To reply either yes or no would so manifestly have involved the judge in an absurd situation that his decision suffered an immediate collapse.

The dilemma is illustrated in Christ's interview with the young ruler who asked: "Good rabbi, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The title "good rabbi" was that which the Jews customarily used in addressing their religious teachers. Its use in this case implied on the part of the young ruler a profound respect for Jesus as a wise and good man. But Jesus would have none of it. His answer was: "How callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is God." By this He obviously meant that the young man's salutation went too far unless it could go further; for Christ claimed to be more than a "good rabbi"; He claimed to stand solitary and alone, wiser than the wisest and better than the best; He claimed to be nothing less than "equal with God." It was a stupendous claim; for it made Him an impostor unless He was what He claimed to be. To say that He was merely "a good man" is absurd; because it affirms either too much or too little. A logical thinker is bound, in view of the claims of Jesus, either to denounce Him as an impostor and a charlatan or else to receive Him, as Thomas did, saying, "My Lord and my God."

A complex form of the dilemma is the *trilemma*. It may be found in the remarkable silence of Christ as

to the alleged errors of the Scriptures. The three horns of the trilemma are as follows: (1) These alleged errors were not in the Scriptures and He knew it. (2) The errors were there but Christ was not aware of it. This would be to affirm that He was less familiar with the Scriptures than are those "Biblical experts" who profess to have discovered thousands of them. If, indeed, with the assumption of omniscience on His lips, He really knew less of Scripture than some of our modern professors of Biblical science, then surely He is not competent to be our instructor in spiritual things. In that case, it would obviously be wiser for such as are in serious quest of truth to sit as disciples at the feet of those who know more than He. (3) He was aware of the fact that the Scriptures are full of errors but He did not choose to reveal it. But in this case, how could He be an honest man? The Jews of that time had an implicit faith in their Scriptures as an infallible rule of faith and practice. If ever there were "Bibliolaters" it was those Jews. Were they mistaken in a matter of such moment, and did Christ know they were mistaken and still not tell them so? Then certainly He is not competent to be our guide in righteousness; for evermore "an honest man's the noblest work of God."

2. The Rule of Residues.

By this is meant the process of weeding out all alternatives and leaving only one possible conclusion.

For example: There are three ways of accounting for the material universe and the present order of things. (1) Matter is eternal and things are substantially as they always have been. (2) The material universe is a fortuitous concourse of atoms; and in so far as there has been any change in the order of things, for better

or worse, it is the result of the calm, automatic process of natural laws. (3) God is the original Creator and Sustainer of all.

By the elimination of the first and second theories the third becomes a necessary conclusion and no further argument is needed to sustain it.

Or suppose the question under consideration is, "*What shall I do to be saved?*" The possible answers—such as, "Do nothing; you will go to heaven anyway"; or "Do your utmost to keep the moral law; no more can be expected of any man"; or "God is love; don't worry about your salvation; no harm can befall you," —having been disposed of, the whole category of conceivable subterfuges having been exhausted, nothing is left but justification by faith, as set forth in John iii. 16.

3. Exposure of False Premises.

It must be remembered that all reasoning, false or true, is simply a proceeding, by one or another method, from certain expressed or assumed premises to a conclusion. As the conclusion hangs on these premises, precisely as an anchor depends on its chain, to break one or more of the premises is to destroy the binding force of the whole argument.

Take, *e. g.*, the common fling at Calvinism based on the alleged quotation from Calvin, "There are infants in hell a span long." It would be possible to meet this allegation by an elaborate consideration of the historical position of the Calvinistic churches on Infant Salvation; but inasmuch as the force of the criticism rests entirely on the authenticity of the quotation referred to, the same end would be accomplished in a more summary manner by denying (*a*) that the quotation is to be found in any of the Calvinistic symbols; (*b*) that

it was ever uttered by Calvin, Jonathan Edwards or any other historic exponent of Calvinistic doctrine; (*c*) that it expresses the views of any authority on Calvinism now in the land of the living, and (*d*) that anybody now on the premises believes it. Of course a challenge like this could be successfully met by simply locating the quotation and naming its author; but, in default of such rebuttal, the bottom of this particular charge against Calvinism drops out.

A recent sermon on "Character" by a distinguished clergyman begins with the words, "We are in the world to be made." The argument of the sermon is based on that statement as its first premise; and just there is its vulnerable point, inasmuch as it can be shown easily that if we are in the world simply "to be made" then self-seeking is our chief end: while, in fact,

> ". . . Unless he can
> Erect himself above himself,
> How poor a thing is man!"

Dr. Watson, in his book "The Mind of the Master," undertook to prove that the Sermon on the Mount is a sufficient creed for any Christian Church, since it contains the sum and substance of Christian truth. If this premise were true, the conclusion would follow as a matter of course; but (1) if Christ did not intend the Sermon on the Mount to be a summary of His teaching, (2) if, as a succinct statement and exposition of the moral law, it lacks doctrinal character and is properly no "creed" at all, (3) if it omits all reference to the divine grace and suggests no means of escape from the penalty of sin; then, the premise being des-

troyed, the argument of the book, despite its literary charm, is dissipated into thin air.

4. Detection of Fallacies.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.[1]

(1) One of the common fallacies in argument is technically known as *post hoc, ergo propter hoc, i. e.*, confusing a mere sequence with cause and effect.[2]

The book of Job furnishes a fine illustration of the exposure of this fallacy. It was assumed by Job's comforters that retribution always follows sin, here and now; *ergo* Job was suffering for his sins. The book is an argument to show that, while suffering is always, directly or indirectly, the result of sin, it is not always punitive in the present life but may be disciplinary and therefore a token of divine love and beneficial in the long run.

[1] A fallacy is very often extremely hard to detect, for rarely is it self-evident. Generally it is imbedded in a mass of other entirely trustworthy material. It may be but a part of a sentence in a volume of many pages, yet if it exists it is fatal to the ultimate convincingness of the argument. As in a calculation, one single figure incorrectly stated will enable us to arrive at any result whatever, though every other figure and the whole of the operations be correct, so a single false assumption in any process of reasoning, though every other be true, will enable us to draw what conclusion we please.—*Baker, "Principles of Argumentation."*

[2] This is perhaps the commonest form of fallacy. It is a stock-in-trade of the demagogue. Pointing to desirable economic or political conditions which have just begun to appear, he names some legislative measure of his party some time precedent, and declares that the desirable results come from it. It is upon this fallacy that much of the success of patent medicines depends. A man has been unwell. He takes some much-advertised nostrum, and after a time he is better. He and the public declare that surely the medicine cured him.—*Baker, "Principles of Argumentation."*

A striking illustration of this mode of refutation is found in Christ's reference to a company of Galilean worshippers who had been slain by Pilate while they were ministering at the altar. It was affirmed that these men had suffered justly, and according to the divine law of retribution, for a violation of the altar; but Jesus said: "Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered these things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Thus briefly did Jesus puncture the fallacy that exact punishment is dealt out in this world for every sin; insisting that eternity must be taken into the reckoning, and that every sin must be followed sooner or later by its precise measure of penalty, unless there is found some divinely accredited mode of escape from it.

(2) *Equivocation.* The fallacy here lies in a doubtful and disingenuous use of words;[1] nor is it always an easy matter to expose it.

No argument can be carried to a just conclusion

[1] "Is a constitutional government better for a population than an absolute rule?" What a number of points have to be clearly apprehended before we are in a position to say one word on such a question! What is meant by "constitution"? by "constitutional government"? by "better"? by "a population"? and by "absolutism"? The ideas represented by these various words ought, I do not say, to be as perfectly defined and located in the minds of the speakers as objects of sight in a landscape, but to be sufficiently, even though incompletely, apprehended before they have a right to speak.—*Cardinal Newman.*

unless the contestants stand on common ground. For example, the Biblical controversy is bound to be merely an indeterminate and indeterminable skirmish so long as there is no agreement as to the meaning of the word "inspiration." If the Scriptural definition (which is also the simple, etymological definition) of the word, namely *Theopneustia* or "God-breathed," were to be received, the lines would be drawn immediately between those who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures and those who do not. The strength of conservative scholars at this point lies in the fact that they accept the Scriptural meaning of the word; but the difficulty is in holding their opponents to that definition of it.

The word "contains," as used in the same controversy, is an instance of similar equivocation. To say that the Scriptures "contain truth" may mean much or little. Quartz "contains" gold, so do auriferous sands, old red sandstone and sea water; the question is whether they contain it in paying quantities or not.

The dictionary is as much sinned against as the Bible in these days. The terms "divinity," "incarnation," "vicarious atonement," "resurrection" and practically all words and phrases that designate spiritual facts are used equivocally: so that a clear argument moving on to a definite conclusion is quite impossible unless the parties to the argument are at the outset agreed as to what they are talking about. Unfortunately such an agreement is impossible so long as either party is disposed to explain away rather than to explain the facts in question. The only alternative is to expose the fallacy in the equivocal use of terms. The word "vicarious," for example, has a meaning made

definite not only by etymological derivation but by historic use; and in an argument on the Atonement an exposure of any distortion or dissipation of that meaning disposes of much of the ammunition used against the doctrine denoted by it.

(3) *Petititio principii*, or begging the question.[1] The question is often begged, in default of valid argument, by a false statement of an adversary's position. A straw man is set up to be knocked down, which is an easy thing to do.

For example, the argument against the trustworthiness or so-called "inerrancy" of the Scriptures is pressed upon the alleged statement of its defenders that there are no errors in current versions. This statement, however, is not made; nor do any sensible friends of the Bible believe it. What they do affirm is (*a*) that there were not nor could possibly have been any errors in the original autograph; and (*b*) that the errors existing in current versions are of such a character and so relatively unimportant as to corroborate that view. The inspiration of versions is nowhere contended for; and to so represent the contention is to "beg the question." What is insisted upon is the inspiration and corresponding inerrancy of the original "God-breathed" Word.

[1] When Thwackum, in "Tom Jones," asked "Can there be any honour without religion?" and later added: "When I mention 'religion,' I mean the Christian religion, and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England. And when I mention 'honour' I mean that mode of divine grace which is not only consistent with but dependent upon this religion, and is consistent with and dependent upon no other," it is clear that he begged the question in his definition.—*Baker, "Principles of Argumentation."*

(4) *Ignoratio elenchi;* that is, evading the question. A distinguished jurist in his advice to young lawyers bade them, "If the law is with you address the court; if the evidence is with you, address the jury; but if you have neither the law nor the evidence in your favour, abuse the opposing counsel." That would be to put the *ignoratio elenchi* into practice.

It is not easy to carry on a fair argument with one who persists in dodging the issue. General Braddock was a great strategist but he suffered ignominious defeat in 1755 at the hands of a savage foe because he had not learned what to do with an enemy that persisted in skipping from tree to tree. To drive such an adversary into the open and force him to stand and withstand, of course that is the thing to be done; and clever is the man who can do it.

(5) *Inconsistency.* It is the part of wisdom, when possible, to show the incongruity between the various parts of an adversary's case; as when he cries in one breath: "Back to Christ!" in the next belittles the doctrinal teachings of Christ, and forthwith betrays the fact that he is not thinking of the historic Christ at all but of another whom he has conjured out of his own imagination. Consistency is the Kohinoor among controversial jewels; so much so, indeed, that one rarely meets with it.

(E) SUGGESTIONS

1. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you."

2. This does not mean, however, that there is anything comely or praiseworthy in a disputatious spirit. "So far as in you lies, be at peace with all men."

Avoid the attitude of the preacher immortalized by Hudibras on this wise:

> "For he was of that stubborn crew
> Of errant saints, whom all men grant
> To be the true church militant;
> Such as do build their faith upon
> The holy text of pike and gun,
> Decide all controversies by
> Infallible artillery,
> And prove their doctrine orthodox
> By apostolic blows and knocks."

3. Never unsettle the belief of a man until you are sure you have a better belief wherewith to supplant it. The poorest crutch a cripple ever had is better than none at all. A teacher who simply rings out the false without ringing in the true is helper to nobody. David Hume's mother gave up her old-fashioned faith in pursuance of his arguments; but on her death-bed she reproached him because he had left her nothing to lean on.

4. Know your ground. Don't undertake more than you can do. Much of our floundering comes from venturing beyond our depth, as the old poet Quarles says:

> "Free will's disputed, consubstantiation,
> And the deep ocean of predestination;
> Where, daring venture oft too far into 't,
> They, Pharaoh-like, are drown'd both horse
> and foot."

Let technical science and philosophy alone unless you are sufficiently familiar with them to preach to scientists

and philosophers without being laughed at.[1] Remember that you are set for the defense of spiritual verities, and that spiritual things are not acquired by the application of any rule of three but are "spiritually discerned." Scientific demonstrations of verities which lie beyond the purview of the five physical senses are impossible. Faith, the sixth sense, alone can perceive and apprehend them.

5. Assume self-evident and well established facts. Waste no time or energy in carrying coals to Newcastle. Take the axioms for that they are worth and move on.[2]

6. Stick to the question. A parenthesis in an argument is like losing one's breath. "Branching" is letting go.

7. Don't run to words. The best speech ever made by General Garfield was when, at a critical time in the Civil War, standing on the steps of the old Astor House in New York, he said to an excited multitude, "God reigns and the country is safe." Some sermons are like wagon-loads of charcoal while others are like diamonds; in both cases carbon is the base; compression makes the *ad valorem* difference.

[1] There is no longer any excuse for a preacher's ignorance of science; and we trust that the day has forever passed in which a man with any pretense to intelligence will attack from his pulpit what is now recognized as one of the foremost allies of our Christian religion. As for the man who rushes into a controversy for which he has neither natural aptitude nor acquired equipment, it may be sufficient to advise him to lay to heart the advice "not to raise the devil unless you can lay him."—*Pattison, "The Making of the Sermon."*

[2] "Mr. Jones," said Chief Justice Marshall on one occasion to an attorney who was rehearsing to the court some elementary principle from Blackstone's Commentaries, "there are some things which the Supreme Court of the United States may be presumed to know."—*Phelps, "Theory of Preaching."*

8. Honor the climax. Gain power as you move on. Beware of the anticlimax, *i. e.*, running to dribblings, as in De Quincey's "Such a rogue would not hesitate at murder, robbery, drinking, incivility or procrastination!" Close with your congregation open-mouthed, not yawning but waiting for more.

9. Be earnest. It is not necessary to saw the air; but an appearance of lassitude or indifference in the pulpit begets apathy in the pews. "Come with me," said Jehu, "and see my zeal for the Lord"; and his zeal, such as it was, was sufficiently demonstrated by his way of doing things.

> "'Tis not enough that what you say is true:
> To make us feel it, you must feel it too;
> Show yourself warm, and that will warmth impart
> To every hearer's sympathizing heart."

10. Be sincere. Do not speak beyond the measure of your convictions; and always mean what you say. Channing was led into doubt, in his boyhood, by hearing his father whistle a merry air on his way home from a sermon on "The Judgment Day."

11. Spend your resources. Keep nothing back for use on a future occasion. Empty yourself, and trust God to fill you again. A good preacher is like a well which grows better and better as the neighbours draw from it.

12. Be practical. "Be a man among men," as Jean Paul said, "and not a dreamer among the shadows." Aim your sermons at the affairs of life. No abstractions. No speculations. Remember what the shepherd in the fable said to the philosopher who, while star-gazing, fell into a pit: "This would not have happened

had you, instead of studying the heavens, been watching your path."[1]

13. Adjust your sermon to circumstances. Jonathan Edwards knew how to preach to scholars in the terminology of the schools, but he was also able to address the Pequot Indians in language as simple as a, b, c.[2]

14. Truckle to nobody. Do not modify truth or ethics for fear of offending people in your audience.[3]

[1] An old sailor in one of George MacDonald's fictions said, "I ain't a bit frightened of our parson; I'll tell you why, sir; he's got a good telescope, and he gets to the masthead, and he keeps a good lookout, and he sings out, 'Land! Land ahead!' or 'Breakers ahead!' and he gives directions accordin'."—*Hood, "Vocation of the Preacher."*

[2] "In the Church of the Wilderness Edwards wrought,
Shaping his creed at the forge of thought;
And with Thor's own hammer welded and bent
The iron links of his argument,
Which strove to grasp in its mighty span
The purpose of God and the fate of man!
Yet faithful still in his daily round
To the weak, and the poor and the sin-sick, found
The schoolman's lore and the casuist's art
Drew warmth and life from his fervent heart.
Had he not seen in the solitudes
Of his deep and dark Northampton woods
A vision of love about him fall?"

—*Whittier.*

[3] A young man in Bristol announced his text, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." He began by condoning the heavy condemnation and, in an affected manner, shaded off the darkness of the doom of unbelief. He grew sentimental and begged pardon of an audience rather more polite than usual for the sad statement made in the text. "But, indeed," said he, "he that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not,—indeed, I regret to say,—I beg your pardon for uttering the terrible truth—but indeed he shall be sentenced to a place which here I dare not

Dr. South was a great preacher, but he would have been a greater had he not been overinfluenced by his relations with the crown and the nobility. We respect the chaplain of Queen Elizabeth who, on being requested to read the service in her hallway, because she had not yet risen from her couch, indignantly declined to "whustle his prayers through a keyhole."[1]

15. Avoid personalities. It is a coward's trick to denounce a man who cannot talk back. Do not presume too far on your canonicals.

16. "Be courteous." Keep your temper under all circumstances; "and, if you fall or if you rise, be each, pray God, a gentleman." To lose one's temper in a controversy is to throw away one's advantage. In one of Charles Lamb's essays he advises calmness on this wise: "There is that shrewd little fellow Titubus. We have seldom known him to be engaged in an argument when we were not convinced he had the best of it, if his tongue would but fairly have succeeded him. When he has been spluttering excellent broken sense for an

mention." The last words were delivered in a whisper. Then up rose Sammy Breeze. He began, "I shall take the same text to-night which you have just heard. Our young friend has been fery foine to-night; he has told you some fery polite things. I am not fery foine and I am not polite; but I will preach a little bit of Gospel to you, which is this—'He that pelieveth shall be saved, and he that pelieveth not shall be tamned'; *and I begs no pardons.*"—*Hood, "Vocation of the Preacher."*

[1] "Out of the pulpit," John Knox said to Mary Queen of Scots, when she complained that never had prince been handled as she was by him in his sermons, "few had occasion to be offended with him. There, however, he was not master of himself but bound to obey Him who commanded him to speak plainly and to flatter no flesh on the face of the earth."—*Pattison, "The Making of the Sermon."*

hour together, writhing and labouring to be delivered of the point of dispute—the very gist of the controversy knocking at his teeth, which like some obstinate iron grating still obstructed its deliverance,—his puny form convulsed and face reddening all over at an unfairness in logic which he wanted articulation to expose; it has moved our gall to see a smooth, portly fellow of an adversary that cared not a button for the merits of the question, by merely laying his hand upon the head of Titubus and desiring him to be calm (your tall disputants have always the advantage) with a provoking sneer, carry the argument clean from him in the opinion of all the bystanders, who have gone away convinced that Titubus *must* have been in the wrong because he was in a passion, and that his opponent is one of the fairest and, at the same time, one of the most dispassionate arguers breathing."

It is related that a public man at a banquet, losing control of himself in an argument, threw a glass of wine into his adversary's face, whereupon the latter, wiping it off with his handkerchief, calmly remarked, "That, sir, was a digression; let us now resume the argument." And, of course, he had the best of it.

17. Make your hearers think. You may not be able to convince them of the correctness of your views; but at all hazards make them think. It is far better to look into the eyes of an audience that proposes to put what you say to the acid test of mind and conscience, than of one that will receive what you say as men swallow oysters without masticating them. To make men think, think for themselves, think in the light of sound reason backed by divine authority—this is the preacher's business. And to that end he must give them something

to think about; which is impossible unless he has himself done some hard thinking beforehand.

18. Take heed and beware of dogmatizing on your own hook. Who is a preacher, that he should presume to impose his personal opinions on other people as if he were inspired of God?

19. Study the methods of Christ. He was the wonderful Preacher. Read His sermon on the Unfinished Tower, with its lesson, "Stop and think! Count the cost of right living before you begin it!" Read His interview with the woman of Samaria; observe His singular tact in bringing her circuitously face to face with her sin, and then face to face with the possibility of salvation. He is worthy of our imitation; because He was the great Master of the art of putting things.

III

THE PERORATION

(A) ITS IMPORTANCE

THE peroration winds up the argument. The sermon is "a nail driven by the master of assemblies"; and the peroration is intended to clinch it.

For this reason, the preacher should devote more careful and prayerful attention to the close of the sermon than to any other portion of it. He cannot safely trust to the moment for his last words.

Edmund Burke, in preparing his defense of Queen Caroline, was so impressed with the importance of concluding his argument in just the right manner,—so that "the last impression" on the mind of Parliament might incline its members to a favourable verdict for his royal client,—that he not only wrote his peroration most elaborately but rewrote it twenty times. Justice was what he claimed; only justice. In his argument he rang the changes on that word. His conclusion was as follows: "Such, my lords, is the case now before you. Such is the evidence in support of this measure —evidence inadequate to prove a debt—impotent to deprive of a civil right—ridiculous to convict of the lowest offense—scandalous if brought forward to support a charge of the highest nature which the law

knows—monstrous to ruin the honour and blast the name of an English queen! What shall I say, then, if this is the proof by which an act of judicial legislation, a parliamentary sentence, an *ex post facto* law is sought to be passed against this defenseless woman? My lords, I pray you to pause. I do earnestly beseech you to take heed. You are standing upon the brink of a precipice—then beware! It will go forth as your judgment, if sentence shall go against the Queen. But it will be the only judgment you ever pronounced, which, instead of reaching its object, will return and bound back upon those who give it. Save the country, my lords, from the horrors of this catastrophe—save yourselves from this peril—rescue the country, of which you are the ornaments, but in which you can flourish no longer when severed from the people than the blossom when cut off from the roots and the stem from the tree. Save that country, that you may continue to adorn it—save the Queen who is in jeopardy—save the Aristocracy which is shaken—save the Altar, which must stagger with the blow that rends its kindred throne! You have said, my lords, you have willed—the Church and the King have willed—that the Queen shall be deprived of its solemn service. She has, instead of that solemnity, the heartfelt prayers of the people. She wants no prayers of mine: but I do here pour forth my humble supplications at the Throne of Mercy, that mercy may be poured down upon the people in larger measure than the merits of their rulers may deserve, and that your hearts may be turned to justice!"

(B) ITS FORM

1. The peroration may take the form of a recapitu-

lation or summing up.[1] This, however, is usually not enough, inasmuch as it does not bring the sermon to a point. An old whaler, after listening to a discourse which lacked an effective conclusion, made a just criticism in the remark that it "had no harpoon in it."[2]

2. It may assume the form of an application. The old-time preachers almost invariably closed their sermons with a series of "practical observations" which were in the nature of an application of the argument to the hearers' needs; and, notwithstanding their wearisome length in many cases, the custom was a good one.

But here as everywhere brevity is the soul of wit and of wisdom as well. Strike, and have done with it. The historic sermon of William Carey on Foreign Missions closed his argument in briefest terms: "Wherefore, let us undertake great things for God and expect great things from Him!"

3. It may take the form of a warning or admoni-

[1] Recapitulation is synopsis. Its object is to compress and epitomize, so that the hearer shall feel the whole force of the discussion at a blow.—*Phelps, "Theory of Preaching."*

[2] In recapitulating, the danger is that you fall into repetition. All that you should aim to do is to revive recollection. You are now in a position to survey the field; and it is not necessary that you should fight your battle all over again. Vary your language therefore; avoid the phrases which you have previously used; choose your words with great care; pack your sentences closely; and by compression gain cumulated force. "In your introduction," a homely Welsh preacher was wont to counsel young preachers, "show the people where you are going, and in your application remind them where you have been." So Phillips Brooks begins this part of one of his sermons with these words: "Thus, then, I have passed through the ground which I proposed. See where our thought has led us." —*Pattison, "Making of the Sermon."*

tion. In this case, however, it should be very tender and sympathetic. The sermon in which our Lord most severely denounced the scribes and Pharisees for their superficial piety, uttering woes that were like flashes of divine wrath, closed with the pathetic words: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

4. It may embody an earnest appeal or exhortation.

(1) This may be addressed to the intellect: commending the argument of the discourse to the thoughtful attention of the hearer: as "Think on these things."

(2) Or to the emotions; in an endeavour to make the hearer feel the importance of the matter in hand. Most men acknowledge the truth of the Gospel, but multitudes do not feel it.

(3) Or to the will; and this is most important of all. The prodigal in the far country knew the folly of his riotous living; and, when reduced to rags and tatters and the shame of the swine-field, he deeply felt it; but intellectual conviction and emotional sentiment were alike ineffective until, by the recollection of the comforts of his father's house, his will was aroused so that he said, "I will arise and go!"[1]

[1] In this consists the chief difference between hortation in the pulpit and the scenic impression of the stage. Theatric passion ends with itself. Homiletic appeals aim at an execution of something beyond the emotive excitement. "*What will you do about it?*" is the question which the pulpit always asks, the stage never. Appeals, therefore, should always be constructed with fidelity to this distinction. They should never

Let the preacher bear in mind that when he has done his utmost, his hearer is still his own master and at liberty to "gang his ain gait." God Himself, in recognition of this sovereign power of the individual, "draws him with the cords of a man." Wherefore, in the peroration of the sermon, which is the preacher's last chance, he should exert himself to the utmost to bring about an immediate decision. For

> "Though God be good and free be heaven,
> No force divine can love compel;
> And, though the song of sins forgiven
> Should ring through lowest hell,
> The sweet persuasion of His voice
> Respects thy sanctity of will:
> He giveth day; thou hast thy choice
> To walk in darkness still."

(C) SUGGESTIONS

1. Close hopefully. The average reader likes a story that ends well. The preacher, most of all men, should be an optimist, not believing that whatever is is right, but that, in so far as it is not right, his business is to help make it so. He is a preacher of "the gospel of the glory of the happy God"; wherefore the note of hopefulness should be the last to linger on his lips.

If he is preaching a New Year's sermon, *e. g.*, let regrets for the mislived past engage his attention only so far as they suggest, by the way of the Cross, the hope of better things and brighter days. Observe the stimulating note in Paul's exhortation: "Forgetting the

fall into the theatrical vein, never play upon the emotions as the end of discourse, never rest with working up a given heat of feeling, never pause with success in making tears flow.—*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching*."

things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." [1]

2. Lean hard on authority.[2] Keep yourself in the background, as far as possible, and let God speak through you. Paul's attitude is the one that wins a reverent hearing: "I then, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ." It is not what the man in the pulpit is or thinks himself to be, but what he stands for, that counts. Wherefore, keep your credentials in sight, and make yourself impressive not by your "cloth" nor by any "holy whine" or other ministerial airs or affectations, but by the faithful presentation of your message.

3. Be brief: but not too brief. Leave "sermonettes"

[1] The hymns of Charles Wesley, like his brother John's sermons, usually work up to a climax of bright anticipation; one of them, however, is difficult to sing because its last verse is written in the minor key:

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never dying soul to save
And fit it for the sky.

"Teach me to watch and pray
And on thyself rely,
Assured if I my trust betray
I shall forever die."

[2] The preaching that is most effective has a "Thus saith the Lord" back of it and through it. This was the secret of the apostles' success. This gave to the prophets their commanding influence. This made the Reformers a tremendous factor in their generation. This imparted life and vigour to the ministry of the fathers in former days. This is what is greatly needed in many of our pulpits to-day.—*McKinney*, "*Effective Preaching*."

to preacherlings. Take time to deliver your message and then make your bow. Give "finally" its face value. Some sermons are like Charles the Second who was "such an unconscionable time a-dying." The fault of Thackeray—best of story-tellers otherwise—was that he never knew when to stop: as in "The Newcomes," where he reached his proper conclusion at the old Colonel's *Adsum*, and then kept maundering on.[1]

The great preacher Massillon said, "Believe me, I speak from experience, and long experience: The more you say, the less will be retained. The less you say, the more the hearers will be profited. By overcharging their memory you destroy it, as we put out lamps by

[1] The present disposition is to demand short sermons. At a bookseller's shop in London, John Henry Newman saw sermons labelled: "Warranted orthodox, not preached before, and twenty minutes." Twenty minutes "with a leaning to mercy" was the pithy way in which an English judge answered our question. Even Mr. Spurgeon considered forty minutes sufficient for a discourse, and he himself rarely exceeded that time. Mullois says: "The harangues of Napoleon only lasted a few minutes, yet they electrified whole armies." The old Puritans were wont to say—although in this matter they preached better than they practiced—that it was wiser to send the people away longing than loathing; and Hesiod's famous dictum, "The half is more than the whole," has, I think, an unintended bearing on our present point. Learn to leave well alone, and to cease firing when your ammunition is gone. Congregations know blank cartridges, and they are not afraid of them. As you value your reputation for truthfulness and fair play do not announce that you mean to conclude and then fail to keep your promise. Do not say, "Finally—In conclusion—One word more—And now before we part." This is to recall Pope's ode, only in no seraphic mood,

> "Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying;
> Oh, the pain, the bliss of dying!"
>
> —*Pattison, "Making of the Sermon."*

overfilling them with oil and drown plants by immoderately watering them. When a discourse is too long, the end obliterates the middle and the beginning. Ordinary preachers are acceptable if they be short, and excellent ones weary us when they are too long."

4. The formal peroration may, on occasion, be omitted altogether. It is not infrequently the case that the preacher feels, at a certain point well on in his argument, that he has made his case; and there is the place to stop. A man is done when he is through with the business in hand. In a country church in Scotland a good wife whispered to her husband, "Is na the minister near dune, think ye?" to which he softly answered, "Aye, he's dune lang syne; but he disna ken it."

5. Do not habitually close with a verse of poetry. Now and then it will answer better than anything else; but as a rule poetry, however beautiful, is not so well suited as energetic prose to the driving home of a great truth. Dr. Doddridge often concluded his sermons with verses of his own composition; *e. g.*, "Jesus, I love Thy charming name"; but the average preacher would better not try it.

6. Do not introduce any new matter in the peroration. When tempted to add a few tangential or incidental remarks, don't do it. It is always a mistake to dissipate an impression already made by diverting attention to matters correlated but of minor moment. Cease firing when you have no more ammunition that fits your gun.

7. It may be wise, on occasion, to close your argument with a reference to some passing event or some matter of immediate interest in the parish. The practical application is thus literally "brought home."

For example, how better could a sermon on The Un-

selfish Life be concluded than by a reference to a shipwreck in which the captain made his escape with two life-preservers on, while his wife was drowned and one of his deck-hands perished after saving many passengers? What a comment on the words of Jesus, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall save it unto life eternal."

8. Make no qualified conclusions. Do not "hedge" your argument with any ifs or peradventures or misgivings. If any concessions are to be made to the argument on the other side it should be done anywhere else rather than in the peroration. The last blow should be struck with a firm, strong hand. Paul closed his sermon on "Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment to Come" with such positive energy as to leave his audience trembling.

9. Master your peroration. Memorize it, if need be. The moment may suggest something better than you intended; but to trust to the moment's doing so is to lean on a broken reed.

10. In any case and under all circumstances the peroration should be the climacteric of the sermon.[1] It is, for the case presented, the preacher's last opportunity. His message is now just outside the bay: let it sail in![2]

[1] A sermon should be constructed somewhat like those great stockades that are built by game-drivers in Africa and elsewhere, extending perhaps over several miles of country, but converging as they proceed, until they end in a death trap. Those who drive the game begin at a distance with much noise and other means whereby to alarm the game and drive it between the stockades, and so they are forced onward until they fall inevitably into the trap.—*Breed, "Preparing to Preach."*

[2] The word opportunity is from *ob-portus*, meaning "at the mouth of the harbour."

PART FOURTH

The Forensic or Finished Discourse

I

STYLE

I KNOW of no better way of introducing this chapter than to quote from John Ruskin as follows: "There are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition or as a divine message. If we look upon it entirely as the first, and require our clergymen to finish it with their utmost care and learning for our better delight, whether of ear or intellect, we shall necessarily be led to expect much formality and stateliness in its delivery, and to think that all is not well if the pulpit have not a golden fringe round it and a goodly cushion in front of it, and if the sermon be not fairly written in a black book, to be smoothed upon the cushion in a majestic manner before beginning. All this we shall duly come to expect; but we shall at the same time consider the treatise thus prepared as something to which it is our duty to listen, without restlessness, for half an hour or three-quarters, but which, when that duty has been decorously performed, we may dismiss from our minds in happy confidence of being provided with another when next it shall be necessary. —But if once we begin to regard the preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death whether we hear or refuse; if we look upon him as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, and having allowed to him but an

hour or two in the seven days to speak to them ; if we make some endeavour to conceive how precious those hours ought to be to him—a small vantage on the side of God—after his flock has been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptation, and he has been forced to watch the thorn and thistle springing in their hearts and to see what wheat had been scattered there snatched from the wayside by this wild bird and the other ; and at last, when, breathless and weary with the week's labour, they give him this interval of imperfect and languid hearing, he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master Himself has stood and knocked, yet none opened, and to call at the opening of those dark streets where Wisdom herself has stretched forth her hands, and no man regarded—thirty minutes to raise the dead in ;—let us but once understand and feel this, and we shall look with changed eyes upon the frippery of gay furniture about the place whence the message of judgment must be delivered, which either breathes upon the dry bones that they may live, or, if ineffectual, remains recorded in condemnation perhaps against the utterer and the listener alike, but assuredly against one of them. We shall not so easily bear with silk and gold upon the seat of judgment, nor with ornament of oratory in the mouth of the messenger ; we shall wish that his words may be simple, even when they are sweetest, and the place from whence he speaks like a marble rock in the desert, about which the people have gathered in their thirst."

Be it observed, however, that the author of those earnest words would have been the last man in the world to encourage a slipshod mode of preaching; since he was himself one of the foremost masters of correct speech.

1. The best definition of literary style is *the use of right words in right places.*

The best exemplar for preachers is Christ. He was a master of good rhetoric, knowing precisely what He wanted to say and just how to say it.

What could be finer than this: "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Contrast that with Thomson's poetical paraphrase:

"Observe the rising lily's snowy grace,
Observe the various vegetable race;
They neither toil nor spin but careless grow;
Yet see how warm they blush, how bright they glow!
What regal vestments can with them compare?
What king so shining, or what queen so fair!"

2. *The elements of style* are three:

(*a*) Clearness. The familiar saying of Talleyrand, "The purpose of language is to conceal thought," has from time immemorial had a special significance in international diplomacy; but of late there is even in that quarter a disposition to favour a lucid and ingenuous mode of expression. It is possible to conceive of circumstances in which the astute representatives of secular government might be justified in making a prolix concealment of thought; but the pulpit has no such occasion.[1] The ambassador of Christ has no furtive plans, nor any policies which may not be advocated openly and aboveboard. Christ's servants are children of the light and of the day.

In so far as there ever was a "mystery" in the plan of redemption it is "now made manifest according to the commandment of the everlasting God." Wherefore it is the business of the preacher to make his message clear, so clear that the wayfaring man, be he ever so simple, need not err therein. To aim at profundity in the presentation of the Gospel is pure pedantry. Profundity is bathos. When a preacher is not understood by his hearers, the warrantable inference is not

[1] Doddridge speaks with dolorous magnanimity of the effect which it cost him to discard from his style certain words, metaphors, constructions, which his literary taste tempted him to use, but which his conscience rejected as unsuited to the capacities of his hearers. This was mourning the loss of useless tools. Such condescension is in the direct line of scholarly elevation. A man grows in literary dignity with every conquest of that kind which he achieves over himself. It ought not to be suffered to put on the dignity of a self-conquest; it should be the intuition and the joy of a cultivated taste.—*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching.*"

that he is learnedly philosophic but that he does not himself understand what he is driving at.[1]

(*b*) Elegance. There is much false elegance in pulpit rhetoric. "Prunes and prisms" make poor congregational diet. Cowper had this in mind when he wrote:

> "See where the famed Adonis passes by,
> The man of spotless life and spotless tie;
> His reputation (none the fact disputes)
> Has ever been as brilliant as his boots:

[1] "With a bug, bug, bug, and a hum, hum, hum,
Hither we mighty Philosophers come!
Professors we,
From over the sea,
From the land where Professors in plenty be;
And we thrive and flourish, as well we may,
In the land that produced one Kant with a K
And many Cants with a C:
Where Hegel taught, to his profit and fame,
That something and nothing were one and the same,
The absolute difference never a jot being
'Twixt having and not having, being and not being;
Where, reared by Oken's plastic hands,
The eternal Nothing of Nature stands;
And Theology sits on her throne of pride,
As Arithmetic personified.
So we change to a gladder and livelier strain,
For great god Pan is alive again;
He lives and he reigns once more.
With deep intuition and mystical rite,
We worship the Absolute-Infinite,
The Universe-Ego, the Plenary-Void,
The Subject-Object identified,
The Great Nothing-Something, the Being-Thought,
That mouldeth the mass of Chaotic-Nought.
With a bug, bug, bug, and a hum, hum, hum,
Hither we great Professors come!"

—*Dean Mansell.*

And all his flock believe exceptionless
His points of doctrine and his points of dress;
He makes the supercilious worldling feel
That e'en religion can be quite genteel:
He lets the hesitating sceptic know
A man may be a Christian and a beau:
And so combines (despite satiric railers)
A model for professors and for tailors."

There is a difference to be observed between the ordinary forms of conversation and those of public address. When Dr. Johnson was in the Hebrides he wrote to a friend: "We were taken up-stairs; and a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed on which we were to lie"; but in the published account of his travels the incident appeared as follows: "Out of one of the beds on which we were to repose started up, at our entrance, a man as black as Cecrops from the forge." Was this an improvement or not? The simple word "lie" has an advantage over "repose"; but there is an open question as between the blunt "dirty fellow" and the more elegant but bombastic "Cecrops from the forge."[1] A vulgar expression has no place in pulpit

[1] Macaulay uses the foregoing to illustrate the difference between Dr. Johnson's colloquial freedom and his literary style:

—"a turgid style,
Which gives to an inch the importance of a mile;
Uplifts the club of Hercules—for what?
To crush a butterfly, or brain a gnat;
Bids ocean labour with tremendous roar,
To heave a cockle-shell upon the shore;
Sets wheels on wheels in motion,—what a clatter!—
To force up one poor nipperkin of water;
Alike in every theme his pompous art,
Heaven's awful thunder, or a rumbling cart."

oratory under any circumstances; but false fineness is quite as bad.[1]

(*c*) Force. When in doubt, the stronger form of expression is to be chosen as the better one. As Robert Hall was reading a transcript of his great sermon on Infidelity he came upon this sentence: "Great God, on what are Thine enemies intent? What are the enterprises of guilt that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not penetrate?" Whereupon he exclaimed, "Did I say 'penetrate'? For that weak word 'penetrate' put *pierce*." This was an improvement.

For the thing to be aimed at by the preacher is the carrying of his point. A beautiful sermon may be as worthless as a painted ship upon a painted ocean, much admired but bringing no cargo into port.[2]

Sir Astley Cooper tells of a French surgeon, who was reputed to have operated brilliantly in thirty-nine cases of abdominal *sarcoma;* but whose surgical skill was nevertheless called in question because his thirty-nine

[1] Strike out all such words as "methinks I see," "cherubim and seraphim," "the glinting stars," "the stellar heavens," "the circumambient air," "the rustling wings," "the pearly gates," "the glistening dew," "the meandering rills," and "the crystal battlements of heaven." I know how pretty they look to the young eye, and how sweetly they sound in the young ear; but let them go without a sigh.—*Joseph Parker.*

[2] Better far give the people masses of unprepared truth in the rough, like pieces of meat from a butcher's block, chopped off anyhow, bone and all, and even dropped down in the sawdust, than ostentatiously hand them out upon a china dish a delicious slice of nothing at all, decorated with the parsley of poetry, and flavoured with the sauce of affectation.—*Spurgeon, "Lectures to My Students."*

patients had all died under the knife. The preacher's business is not to air his rhetorical skill or culture but to save men.

3. As to *rules of style.* These are mostly to be found in rudimentary text-books. Not a few preachers, skilled in the more advanced studies of a university curriculum, are lamentably ignorant of certain canons of expression which should have been mastered in their early school days. One often hears a good, strong sermon marred by solecisms that provoke the suggestion, Get down your grammar and rhetoric and study them.

> "Little owlet in the glen
> I'm ashamed of you;
> You are ungrammatical
> In speaking as you do.
> You should say, 'To whom! To whom!'
> Not, 'To who! To who!'"[1]

The rules of style have to do with words, sentences, paragraphs and the nexus, as follows:

(*a*) *As to words.* The study of etymology, simple as it seems, is a most fruitful field for the preacher. The grammar is here complemented by the dictionary.[2]

[1] "Your small friend, Miss Katy-did,
May be green, 'tis true,
But you never hear her say
'Katy do! She do!'"

[2] A popular novelist of the present day will wait an hour if necessary for his word. Shelley, sooner than use an inferior word, left a blank in his lines when the right word did not occur to him. To express accurately the shimmer of the long grass or the shade of green under the breaking wave another poet would pause and watch and think for weeks together.

The preacher should have a large vocabulary at his command, though he may customarily use only a small portion of it. A child can express its simple wants by the use of less than a hundred words. The ancient Egyptians had but eight hundred hieroglyphs. The average man is said to need less than a thousand words for common conversation. John Milton used eight thousand, and Shakespeare was master of a splendid vocabulary of fifteen thousand. In the first edition of Webster's Unabridged there were twenty thousand, while the latest edition contains more than one hundred thousand. Some of our best public speakers find the dictionary of value not merely as a book of reference but for systematic study; and it is doubtful if any better course could be pursued for the acquiring of skill and facility in expression.[1]

(1) One's words should, as a rule, be short and simple. Monosyllables are better than polysyllables,

Although we shall not be able to do this, yet it is well for us to lay to heart what John Morley says: "It is not everybody who can command the mighty rhythm of the greatest master of human speech. But every one can make reasonably sure that he knows what he means, and whether he has found the right word."—*Pattison, "Making of the Sermon."*

[1] If ever man was born with great oratorical powers, and could afford to dispense with all helps to success, it was Lord Chatham. Yet even he, the king of British orators, did not trust to the gifts of which Nature had been so prodigal, but laboured indefatigably to improve them by study and discipline. As a means of acquiring copiousness of diction and precision in the choice of words, he submitted to a most painful task. He went twice through a large folio dictionary, examining each word attentively, dwelling on its various shades of meaning and modes of construction, thus endeavouring to bring the whole range of our noble and fluent tongue completely under his control.—*Matthews, "Oratory and Orators."*

though the latter have their uses; as where Dr. Johnson, in an altercation with a fishwoman at Billingsgate reduced her to silence by calling her successively a Triangle, a Rectangle and a Hypothenuse, utterly paralyzing her with his final epithet "Parallelopipedon!" If the preacher desires to make an immediate impression as a learned man among the unlearned this method will answer his purpose; but if he aims at conveying spiritual truth there is a better way.

As an illustration of truth in words of one syllable the first chapter of the Gospel according to John is unsurpassed. Sesquipedalian words may affright the ignorant, but to the thoughtful they are mere rodomontade. The following rhyme in monosyllables is by Addison Alexander:

"Think not that strength lies in the big round word,
Or that the brief and plain must needs be weak.
To whom can this be true who once has heard
The cry for *help*, the tongue that all men speak
When want or woe or fear is in their throat:
So that each word gasped out is like a shriek
Pressed from the sore heart or a strange, wild note
Sung by some far-off fiend? There is a strength
Which dies, if stretched too far or spun too fine,
Which has more height than breadth, more depth than length;
Let but this force of thought and speech be mine,
And he that will may take the sleek, fat phrase,
Which glows and burns not, though it gleam and shine;
Light but no heat; a flash but not a blaze!
Nor is it mere strength that the short word boasts;
It serves of more than flight or storm to tell,
The roar of waves that clash on rock-bound coasts,
The crash of tall trees, where the wild winds swell,
The roar of guns, the groan of men that die
On blood-stained fields. It has a voice as well

For them that far off on their sick-beds lie;
For them that weep, for them that mourn the dead,
For them that laugh and dance and clap their hands.
To joy's quick step as well as grief's slow tread
The sweet, plain words we learned at first keep time;
And though the theme be sad or gay or grand,
With each, with all, they may be made to chime
In thought, or speech, or song, or prose or rhyme."

Children are afraid of the dark because they do not understand it. All mystery, even that of etymological latitude and longitude, overawes the average man. But this is not what preachers are after; their purpose is not to bewilder but to persuade men.

(2) The use of Latin and Greek words is pedantic except in the company of people able to understand them readily, or in cases where a very definite purpose is to be accomplished by their use.[1]

Dr. Samuel Hanson Cox was so familiar with the classic tongues and Hebrew that he interlarded his common conversation with them. In one of his public prayers he is said to have addressed the Deity as the *Ne plus ultra* of desire, the *Sine qua non* of salvation and the *Ultima Thule* of life. This might be forgiven in one who was known to be so familiar with Greek and Latin that his ordinary conversation was full of classical allusions; of course he was understood in heaven, but doubtless some of his hearers were puzzled to follow him.[2] Locke wisely says, "If a man be to

[1] "Church ladders are not always mounted best
By learned clerks and Latinists profess'd."
—*Cowper.*

[2] The old monks were fond of interlarding their discourses with learned words and phrases. Witness this, from an Easter sermon of Bishop Launcelot Andrewes, A. D. 1550: "There was then a new begetting this day. And if a new begetting, a

study any language it ought to be that of his own country."

(3) It is well to be sparing in the use of adjectives. When in doubt, cut them out. Here is a suggestion from Thackeray: "Take my advice," says Mr. Yellowplush, "listen to a humble footmin. It's generally best in poetry to understand puffickly what you mean yourself, and to ingspress your meaning clearly afterwoods—in the simpler words the better, praps. You may, for instans, call a coronet a coronal, an 'ancestral coronal,' if you like; as you might call a hat a 'swart sombrero,' 'a glossy four-and-nine,' 'a silken helm to storm impermeable and lightsome as the breezy gossamer'; but, in the long run, it's as well to call it a hat. It *is* a hat; and that name is quite as poetticle as another. I think it's Playto, or else Harrystottle, who observes that what we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Confess now, dear Barnet, don't you long to call it a polyanthus?"

new Paternitie and Fraternitie, both. By the *hodie genuite* of Christmas, how soone Hee was borne of the Virgin's wombe. Hee became our brother (sinne, except) subject to all our infirmities; so to mortalitie and even to death it selfe. And by death that brotherhood had beene dissolved, but for this dayes rising. By the *hodie genuite* of Easter, as soon as Hee was borne again of the wombe of the grave, Hee begins a new brotherhood, founds a new fraternitie straight; adopts us (wee see) anew againe, by His *fratres meos;* and thereby, Hee that was *primogenitus a mortuis*, becomes *primogenitus inter multos fratres:* when the first begotten from the dead, then the first begotten in this respect among many brethren. Before Hee was ours: now wee are His. That was by the mother's side; so, Hee ours. This is by *Patrem vestrum*, the Father's side; so wee His. But halfe-brothers before; never of whole bloud, till now. Born, by Father and Mother both, *Fratres germanie, Fratres fraterrimi*, we cannot be more."

(4) Avoid pleonasm. Alas for the preacher who has the gift of verbal fluency! Better one vigorous child that struggles to the birth than a large family of weaklings. It is not superfluous to say that more words than enough are just so many too many.

Christ likens the faith of a practical believer to a house built upon a rock: "And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock!" How much more effective than Dr. Campbell's prolix paraphrase: "Wherefore he that shall not only hear and receive these my instructions, but also remember, and consider, and practice, and live according to them, such a man may be compared to one that builds his house upon a rock; for as a house founded upon a rock stands unshaken and firm against all the assaults of rains, and floods, and storms, so the man who, in his life and conversation, actually practices and obeys my instructions, will firmly resist all temptations of the devil, the allurements of pleasure, and the terrors of persecution, and shall be able to stand in the day of judgment and be rewarded of God."

(5) Euphuism is better in the breach than in the observance. Call a spade a spade. Such words as "death" and "hell" are not to be avoided though they grate on certain ears polite. It was once proper in America to speak of "our late unpleasantness" rather than of the Rebellion or the Civil War; but there were reasons for that. Better say shamming than "malingering" and lying than "equivocating." The best of preachers did not veil or modify the language of truth.

(*b*) *Sentences.* We learned in our boyhood that

syntax has to do with the construction and proper use of sentences: but boyhood and syntax, in the case of many preachers, are both a long way off.

(1) The short sentence is to be preferred to the more graceful but less forceful circumlocution. Frequent periods or "full stops" are like the Selahs in the Psalms; they are momentary calls to pause and consider. Dr. John Hall of New York owed much of his fine effectiveness to his use of the short sentence. He studied to be clear and strong. If he presented a profound thought he never said so and his hearers rarely suspected it.

(2) The sentence which looks profound has the presumption against it. Something is wrong with a speaker's syntax when his hearers knit their brows. It was of such a one that a Scotch parishioner said: "Sax days o' the week he's inveesible and on the seventh he's incomprehensible."

(3) The main thing to be desired in a sentence is strength. To that end its muscles must be well knit. Too much elaborateness is not helpful to this end. The wearing quality of a piece of furniture is not enhanced by sandpapering. Sermons like photographic negatives are frequently spoiled by too much retouching. Spurgeon once said to a class of theological students, "We raise no crops by planting boiled potatoes." [1]

[1] A man will stop you in the street and discourse with you there, and be just as limber and affable in his sentences, just as curt and direct and crisp and simple in conversational vernacular as any one; and yet in the pulpit, two-thirds of what he has to say will be Latin paraphrases woven together; three members on one side the sentence-pivot, balanced by three members on the other, and that recurring all the time. This style is false to everything but looks. It may be all in sympathy

(4) A sentence to be used in the pulpit should be constructed oratorically. The colloquial method will answer at times but not always. There is a real difference between a merely rhetorical and an oratorical expression. "Stand up essays" are not orations. Preaching is more than reading what has been written, or reciting what has been memorized. The finest manuscript on Theology or Ethics is not a sermon unless the life of eloquence is breathed into it.

In the construction of the sermon the manner of its delivery should be constantly in mind. It is not denied that some good preachers read their sermons nor that others commit their sermons to memory and declaim them effectively; but this is not oratory. When Andrew Fuller first heard Dr. Chalmers in the pulpit he exclaimed, "If that man would only throw away his papers he might be king of Scotland!" Great with his manuscript, how much greater he might have been without it![1]

(*c*) *Paragraphs.* In reading the trial sermons of

with them; but no man in earnest, talking to his fellow men with a purpose, falls into that artificial style. The man who preaches from the heart to the heart can hardly help preaching so that there shall be a naturalness in his style; and that will be the best style for him.—*Beecher*, "*Yale Lectures.*"

[1] Of Dr. Chalmers it is said: "He wrote everything to be spoken; he wrote everything as if he were speaking it, at least in feeling, if not in actual sounds; he wrote everything with an audience glaring in his face. Hence his sermons have all the advantage, all the verve and palpitation, of direct extempore address. They have none of the chilliness of discourses written before, nor the lukewarmness of discourses served up after the delivery. From the peculiarity of which we have spoken, they have all the pith of preparation, and all the quick leap of impromptu."—*Matthews*, "*Oratory and Orators.*"

theological students I have observed that not a few write continuously, without a break, from beginning to end. This makes a "continent of mud." The breaking up of the sermon into frequent paragraphs, providing they are rightly constructed, helps the preacher to keep going by marking his progress, and enables his hearers to follow him.

A sermon should have structural unity. To this end,

(1) Each paragraph should be a unit; distinct and separate as one of the several links of a chain.

(2) It should have, also, a marked correlation or interlinking with the paragraphs preceding and following it.

(3) No two paragraphs should overlap; else there will be a tedious and awkward semi-repetition, like the "interfering" of a horse, the shuffling gait of a drowsy pedestrian, or the march of Falstaff's army "three steps forward and two steps back."

(4) The relative place of each paragraph in the argument should be quite clear to those who hear it. A friend of mine from Virginia said to an old negro driving an obstreperous team of oxen: "Uncle, where you gwine?" to which he answered, "Where I gwine? Ax dem fool oxen. I don'no *where* I'm gwine."

(5) Let each paragraph be positive. Omit ifs and perhapses. "I wish," said one minister to another, "that I could be as cock-sure of things as you seem to be." The Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of Certainty; and "cock-sureness" built on strong faith is an important part of the furnishing of the man appointed to proclaim it. Dogmatizing, so called, notwithstanding all that is said against it, is not a bad habit if it recognizes the fact that no hearer is under bonds to accept any dogma

under consideration without passing an independent judgment on it.

(6) The successive paragraphs should march on. Cicero said the three requisites of a good argument are "Movement! Movement! Movement!" A true argument does not merely mark time or walk in a treadmill round and round a subject, but it proceeds on a post-road to its destination.

(*d*) *The nexus.* This is important, inasmuch as it fixes the unity of a discourse, like the welding of the successive links of a chain.

Professor Pattison says, "The management of his transitions marks the practiced preacher. They are the bridges of discourse, and by them he passes from one point to another, while for lack of them the preacher finds himself trembling on the edge of some great gulf with no means to get across to his next thought. Into that gulf many a hapless sermon plunges and is lost."

(1) As a rule, I think the nexus or "binder" should be obvious. A speaker in the Roman Forum, as already remarked, led his hearers from point to point of his discourse by pointing at the surrounding booths, one after another, until he reached the "Umbilicus" or climacteric point of interest. In doing so he would naturally indicate his firstlys, secondlys and so on. There is a prejudice in some quarters against such an announcing of points on the ground that it lacks rhetorical grace; but if it holds the interest of the audience and emphasizes the logic of the sermon, that is the main thing.

(2) The binders of the sermon should be consecutive. There must be no "asides," no "remarks in passing," no parentheses, no breaks anywhere; but a marching

right on. A sermon is not a mosaic but a series of mile-stones on the way to a desired end.

(3) The preacher should study variety in his connectives. It is not always necessary to use firstly and secondly. "Next" is a good word, or "Now, one step further." Dr. Lyman Beecher sometimes closed a point or division of his sermon by saying: "Is that perfectly clear? Have you got it? Then nail it down!"

(4) The binder should bind; *i. e.*, it should mark the connection. Paul was a master of the illative conjunctions; when he said: "Therefore" or "Wherefore" it was like helping his hearers over the stepping-stones of a brook to *terra firma* on the other side.

(5) The nexus should be as graceful as possible. Physicians say that when one's knees crack or creak in mounting a stairway it is due to a superflux of lime in the joints. The preacher should pass from step to step of his discourse without an awkward limp or a rasping sound. A due regard for rhetorical lubrication will enable him to do it.

II

ILLUSTRATION

IF a sermon be a "thrust," then a dull sermon is no sermon at all. Nevertheless, it is rumoured that dull preachers are to be found in some parts of the world. Charles Lamb came upon one of them of whom he said, "He is so dry that if you were to prick a hole in him nothing would come out but sawdust." Tennyson's Northern Farmer mentions another:

"An' I hallus com'd to's church, afore my Sally wur dead,
An' 'eered um a-hummin' awaay, loike a buzzard clock ower my 'ead;
An' I never knawed what a mean'd, but I thowt a 'ad summut to saay;
An' I thowt a said what a owt to 'a said—an' I coom'd awaay."

Happy is the man who can preach two sermons every week in the same parish, year in and year out, on a single system of truth, and always keep the eyes of his auditors open and their ears pricked up. In order to do this the preacher must obviously do something more than say solemn things in a commonplace way. He must command a hearing by making his old message stand forth in changing lights and guises ever new.

No man likes to travel over a flat country; better a steep climb occasionally than a monotonous stretch

of prairie. It is not enough for a preacher to declare the truth. God makes raw meat, but the cook must create an appetite by furnishing the feast aright. No man can hold an audience by the bald presentation of abstract facts.[1] The trouble is, we are often content to be dull; we are too indolent or indifferent to be interesting.

Let me then emphasize the importance of throwing the truth into relief. The easiest of arts is photography; any child can touch the button of a kodak; but a photograph is not true to nature. No more is any flat statement. Men must be made to attend, as when gazing on an Alpine landscape: sun on the peaks, mists rising from the valleys, floating clouds and the blue heavens over all. One of the ancient homilists said, "Paint your ideas." Lord Bacon said, "Parables are older than arguments." John Wesley, for this reason, counselled his theologues to study Spenser's "Faerie Queene."

It would appear, therefore, that the art of illustration is entitled to our earnest consideration.

1. *The purpose of illustration* is indicated in the word itself, which means "to make bright," to illuminate a matter or, if one may borrow a definitive phrase from the vernacular, to "put daylight through it."

[1] A young man, having regard to predestination, comes to his pastor and says, "If I am one of the elect, I must be saved, do what I will; if I am not, I must be lost, do what I may." It is impossible to answer this by logic. You must resort to illustration—to an analogy. You say to him: Suppose you are in a dangerous illness. You are told that unless you submit to a serious operation, you must die. Do you reason, if I am predestined to recover, I shall recover without the operation; if to die, I shall die in spite of it? No man in his senses reasons thus in the ordinary affairs of life.—*Dr. Blaikie.*

2. *The rationale of illustration* is set forth in the kindergarten, where a teacher, *e. g.*, instead of undertaking to give an abstract explanation of "roundness" will show a ball or an orange to exemplify it.[1]

Our approval of this method does not mean, however, that grown people are to be entertained with jackstraws. The preacher who took a globe of goldfish into his pulpit to illustrate the divine omniscience betrayed a profound ignorance of the fitness of things.

The best of preachers, namely Christ, was a consummate master of this art. His sermons were picturesque to the last degree. He found "tongues in trees, sermons in stones, books in the running brooks" and homiletic figures in everything. Consequently He was never dull, however profound; but was always impressive and well within the intellectual range of average men.

Paul was another master of this art. The Stadium at Tarsus, which he had doubtless frequented in his boyhood, was an almost endless source of supply for him. War, husbandry and architecture were in like manner

[1] James Russell Lowell said: "There's a deal o' solid kicking in the meekest-looking mule." If the statement had been, There's a good deal of obstinacy covered by apparent amiability, the remark might have passed without a moment's notice; but *attached to such a figure* as the poet used, it will be difficult for the mind ever to get rid of it.—*Joseph Parker.*

[2] If a man's sermon is like a boiled ham and the illustrations are like cloves stuck in it afterwards to make it look a little better, or like a bit of celery or other garnish laid around on the edge for the mere delectation of the eye, it is contemptible. But if you have a real and good use for an illustration, that has a real and direct relation to the end you are seeking, then it may be ornamental, and no fault should be found with it.—*Beecher, "Yale Lectures."*

drawn upon to assist in his clear presentations of religious truth.[1]

3. There are numberless *kinds of illustrations*, some of the most important of which are as follows:

(1) Word painting: *e. g.*, The name of God, being cognate with goodness, conveys at its root an anticipation of the saying "God is love." The word "kind," which is an abbreviation of kinned, suggests our normal attitude towards one another; since we are all kinsfolk in the family of God. The word "edification," a synonym for moral culture or character-building, means literally the construction of a temple; a temple for God's Spirit to dwell in. The word "belief" is said to be from *by-lifian*, meaning "the thing we live by"; which is another way of saying "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." How can a man preach on the Holy Spirit without opening the word *Paraclete*, like a door into the high court of heaven? Or take the word *sacrament;* get your picture from its origin; let the people gathered at the Lord's table see a Roman army with hands uplifted in the *sacramentum*, or vow of loyalty to their captain and the golden eagle, and you have put a new solemnity into the memorial feast. A man must be a very Dry-as-dust who takes no advantage of these illimitable possibilities.[2]

[1] See Howson's "Metaphors of St. Paul."

[2] A thoughtful English writer tells us that, when about nine years old, he learned with much surprise that the word "sincere" was derived from the practice of filling up flaws in furniture with wax, whence *sine cera* came to mean pure, not vamped up or adulterated. This explanation gave him great pleasure, and abode in his memory as having first shown him that there is a reason in words as well as things.—*Matthews, "Words; Their Use and Abuse."*

The dictionary is an inexhaustible mine of word-pictures like the foregoing; so much so that, indeed, there is danger of becoming monotonous or of seeming pedantic by overworking it.[1]

(2) Figures of speech.

(*a*) The metaphor; in which a comparison is expressed in a word; as when Christ said in the breaking of the bread, "This is My body": or as when we speak of a ship "plowing the sea."

(*b*) The simile; in which the comparison is indicated by some such word as "as" or "like." For example, the parables of Christ, beginning, "The kingdom of heaven *is like* unto," etc. Also, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: *so* is every one that is born of the Spirit"; or "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, *even so* must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

(*c*) Personification; that is, the investing of things with human attributes, *e. g.*, "Wisdom crieth without: she uttereth her voice in the streets" (Prov. i. 20–23). The Logos figure in the first chapter of the Gospel according to John is a good example. Also this from Shakespeare,

[1] Theophile Gautier, whose language is remarkable for its copiousness and splendour, enriched his picturesque vocabulary from the most recondite sources. His favourite reading was the dictionary. He loved words for themselves, their look, their aroma, their colour, and kept a supply of them constantly on hand, which he introduced at effective points.—*Matthews, "Words; Their Use and Abuse."*

". . . O gentle sleep,
Nature's soft nurse; how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh mine eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?"

Or this by Oliver Wendell Holmes:

"The spendthrift crocus, bursting through the mould,
Naked and shivering, with his cup of gold."

(3) Passing events. Things are constantly happening in public life or in the parish which may profitably be used for purposes of illustration.[1] When the Tower of Siloam fell, burying a number of people in its ruins, Christ did not hesitate to take advantage of the incident to correct some popular mistakes relative to exact retribution. On another occasion when the subject of His discourse was *Neighbourliness* He found an apropos illustration in the service rendered by a Samaritan stranger to a traveller who had been waylaid and robbed on the Bloody Way. Indeed it was His habit thus to make use of passing events.

(4) Imaginary tales.

(*a*) Fables: *i. e.*, untrue or impossible stories with a moral. Not a few of the great teachers of the past have made profitable use of the fable for purposes of moral instruction; but at this point Christ parts company with them.

[1] It is said of the great English character-painter of the last century, Hogarth, that when he met a peculiar face of a man enraged or sad or in an ecstasy or however moved, he sketched it on the spot, on his thumb-nail, for use in his studio. Take a lesson from him. All things in nature and in human life teem with illustrations of sacred truth. Commence early and keep busy.—*Willcox*, "*The Pastor Amidst His Flock.*"

(*b*) Parables: *i. e.*, fictitious but natural tales, used both to veil and clarify moral truth. In the use of the parable, as distinguished from the fable,[1] our Lord stands solitary and unapproached by any of the great masters. Not that others have not attempted it; as the ancient rabbis and some of the apostolic fathers; but, as Archbishop Trench remarks, they are usually "very far from felicitous." Parable making, like proverb making, looks easy until one attempts it.

(5) As to anecdotes: The fewer the better. Young preachers, make a note of it. Pathetic narratives about little Mary and her brother are worn out. Nevertheless the great evangelists have used them effectively in driving home the saving truths.[2] But the time allotted

[1] The parable is constructed to set forth a truth spiritual and heavenly: this the fable, with all its value, is not; it is essentially of the earth, and never lifts itself above the earth. It never has a higher aim than to inculcate maxims of prudential morality, industry, caution, foresight; and these it will sometimes recommend even at the expense of the higher self-forgetting virtues. The fable just reaches that pitch of morality which the world will understand and approve. But it has no place in the Scripture, and in the nature of things could have none, for the purpose of Scripture excludes it; that purpose being the awakening of man to a consciousness of a divine original, the education of the reason and of all which is spiritual in man.—*Trench on the Parables.*

[2] Spurgeon says: "I have often seen some poor fellow standing at the aisle in the Tabernacle. Why, he looks just like a sparrow that has got into a church and cannot get out again. He cannot make out what sort of service it is; he begins to count how many people sit in the front row in the gallery, and all kinds of ideas pass through his mind. Now I want to attract his attention; how shall I do it? If I quote a text of Scripture, he may not know what it means and may not be interested in it. Shall I put a bit of Latin into the sermon, or quote the original Hebrew or Greek of my text? That will not do for such a man. What shall I do? Ah! I know a

to the modern sermon is too short for long narratives. Brevity is the soul of illustrative wit.

(6) Quotations.[1] The introduction of an apt quotation into a sermon is like the momentary interruption of a speaker by another voice. A wise preacher will not hesitate to pay tribute to wiser thinkers than himself; or to levy upon them for contributions to the consideration of any matter in hand. John Bunyan has thrown into fine relief the dull discourse of many a poor parson. And what chanticleers the poets and hymn-makers have proved themselves to be in drowsy parishes! If you are preaching on "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth," you can do no better than give Burns a chance to paraphrase in "A man's a man for a' that." Shakespeare? Certainly: on many important truths. Byron? Yes, there is scarcely any better authority on remorse; as where he says, "My days are in the yellow leaf." If we turn our backs on inspired sinners we shall lose the benefits of homeopathy. And a truth is a truth no less in Isaak Walton than in Isaac Watts. Great masters of prose and poetry have said some noble things, better than you or I could say them.

The parishioner who, on being advised to take snuff to keep himself awake, retorted by suggesting that the pastor put snuff into his sermons was not far afield. If the preacher is convinced that his own intellectual product does not find a ready market he would do

story that will, I believe, just fit him. Out it comes, and the man does not look up at the gallery any more; but he is wondering whatever the preacher is at."

[1] Quotations can be regarded as illustrations only so far, of course, as they "illustrate," *i. e.*, throw additional light on the matter in hand.

wisely to interlard it—giving due credit, of course—with the sayings of brighter men.

4. *Sources of illustration.*

(1) The Bible. Here is the preacher's Golconda. The time would fail me to tell of Adam and Noah, of the patriarchs and prophets, of Samson and Jephthah and Shamgar with his ox goad, of the apostles and ministering women, who come at our call to let sidelights into our sermons on truth and righteousness. It is a singular thing that the eldest in the congregation will prick up his ears as he did in his boyhood when mention is made of Joseph's coat of many colours or of Daniel in the lion's den.

Do you want to emphasize The Seeking Love of God? Where will you find an illustration so appropriate or forcible as the woman with a candle searching in every nook and cranny for her lost coin? Or the shepherd with his lantern out on the dark mountains, listening for the bleating of his lost sheep and pressing on until he finds it? Or the father of the prodigal, looking over the hills towards the far country and waiting, waiting, until lo, yonder the lad appears in rags and tatters, ashamed to come nearer; so that the father must needs go out and meet him while he is yet a great way off?

If the preacher wants a "Handbook of Illustrations" the Bible will serve his purpose.[1] So Christ Himself in-

[1] "Like as a father pitieth his children," "as an eagle stirreth up her nest," "gone after that which is lost," "lighting a candle and sweeping the house diligently," "as a strong man rejoicing to run a race," "can a woman forget her sucking child," "how often would I have gathered thee as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings"; by such illustrations at once humble and lofty does the Bible make its way into the hearts of men.—*Joseph Parker.*

timated in these words: "Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. xiii. 52). The preacher is here likened to an oriental host who receives a stranger into his home. Desirous of entertaining him he displays his hoarded wealth. As there were no banks or other places of safe deposit in those days, such treasures must needs be buried in the ground or kept in a recess in the wall. It is from such a treasury that the householder brings forth "things new and old": antique coins; necklaces worn by princes of long ago; golden shields bearing the dint of old-time battles; precious stones plucked from the crowns of captive kings; the loot of the campaigns of ages. All these are spread before the eyes of his wondering guest. The preacher is a "scribe." It is his special function to expound the divine Word. The key is at his girdle. His business is to bring forth the wealth of Scripture, illustrative and otherwise, new things and old, to dazzle the eyes.

(2) The parish round. The man who has two good eyes in the front of his head will get illustrations out of his daily experience as one plucks flowers along a country road.

This was Beecher's way. One of his parishioners saw him one Saturday on a Brooklyn ferry-boat watching her pushing her way to the dock; and he said, "I'll see what he has to say about that to-morrow." Sure enough, in the morning sermon on The Foundations of Faith he said, "As I was coming across from New York yesterday I observed that, as the boat forced her way into the narrow basin, the timbers on either side

gave way, once and again, but always righted themselves. So it is with the great fundamentals of truth; they may bend and yield but never to the breaking point. The essential things are grounded forever." [1]

The best illustrations are those which come to the preacher in this manner. I stood once on the landing at Antwerp where a great company of people, mostly peasants, were awaiting the arrival of a ship from America which was to bring back a considerable number of long-absent friends. As the vessel came into view, slowly plowing her way up the Scheldt, the excitement passed all bounds. As she drew nearer, so that at length faces could be recognized, the waiting company stood on tiptoe, many of them calling names and waving hands of welcome. But when the ship came alongside the dock, and the gangplank was out and old friends had landed one by one, a great silence fell upon all. The joy of reunion was too deep for utterance. Old fathers and mothers embraced their bearded sons, with no greeting but tears and kisses. Is this a foregleam of the great "hame-bringing" in heaven; when parted friends shall look again into each other's eyes and little children "lost a while" shall come creeping back into their mother's arms? O blessed day of greeting and hand clasping! All the bright days of earth rolled into one shall not equal it—the day when our ship comes in!

(3) Travel. The preacher who goes only to the next town should bring something back with him;

[1] Some men think in metaphor, some men think in syllogisms. When Henry Ward Beecher spent some weeks in my house, I was struck with his constant use of the word "is like." It sounded as a quotation from the New Testament, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto."—*Joseph Parker.*

something seen through the car-window, perhaps; much more if he should chance to spend a vacation in foreign parts.

But let him beware of opening his traveller's budget too frequently or of displaying too freely the labels on his suit-case. There are others in his congregation who have been to Paris; and those who have not would rather not be reminded of it.

(4) History and biography. There is no end of illustrations to be gotten from the records of the past. "Lives of great men all remind us." Are you to preach on Missions? Get before your mind the picture of William Carey, "the consecrated cobbler," looking up from his bench to his map of the world and praying, in the intervals of his hammering, "O God, save those pagans in India!" No matter what you are to preach about, the mighties of the centuries are at your beck and call. To preach a commonplace sermon on Courage while Joan of Arc and John Knox "who never feared the face of man," and Savonarola and Jenny Geddes with her cutty-stool, and great platoons of less hackneyed heroes, stand in waiting, is a rank homiletic misdemeanour. The chronicles of war and peace, of councils and parliaments, are ready at hand; and our congregations stand, like little Peterkin at the old soldier's knee, with open eyes beholding. I see no objection, moreover to drawing on reputable books of fiction. Pecksniff and Chadband furnish a logical corollary for "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees." But *history* is far more effective, of course, as a narrative of fact.

> "There's wit there,
> Ye'll get there,
> Ye'll find nae ither where."

(5) Mythology. There is no good reason for hesitating to draw on the false religions of the world for enforcement of Christian truth. Ormuzd and Ahriman; Jason and the Argonauts; Prometheus, Atlas, Æsculapius; the Fates and the Furies; Ixion and Tantalus; Elysium and Jotunheim, the Styx, Lethe, Parnassus; all stand for distorted forms of rudimental verities and show, in bold relief, the pathetic consequence of searching for truth with no ultimate basis of authority, even as blind men feel their way along the wall.

(6) Science. The facts of natural science are such as lie within the purview of the five physical senses. The facts of religion which are "unseen and eternal" are verified by faith, which is the sixth or spiritual sense. It is not our business to preach science; and most ministers find themselves on thin ice when they undertake it; but there are analogies here which we may use to advantage. Witness Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World." Botany, astronomy, geology are rich in homiletic suggestion. The preacher who does not follow the archæologist in his excavations among the ruins of the ancient world is quite behind the times. The scientist is not always devout, but science is rightly called the handmaid of religion. Inventions and discoveries are mile-stones in the journey of the coming Christ.

(7) Art. I am sorry for any preacher who can go through a picture gallery without gleaning an armful of homiletic illustrations. The next time you visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art take a long look at Bastien Le Page's picture of *Joan of Arc;* long enough to see the visions which she is seeing with those pale, far-away eyes of hers, and to hear the Call to Duty

which is ringing in her ears. Then take a long look at Gabriel Max's picture of *The Last Token*, where a girl facing the beasts of the arena is looking up with questioning eyes towards the gallery, from which some friendly hand has dropped the rose that is lying at her feet. Is there no side-light there for a sermon on Sympathy or Kindness? Then another long look at *The Rehearsal*, where an amateur musician is "trying" for a place in the choir; timid, awkward; lips just parting; what will be the result? Has she a voice? Will she win out? This is a picture that lingers in memory, to find an application on all Commencement days.

(8) Personal experience. Here, as the roadside placard says to the engineer, "Go slow." Yet Paul never preached so well as when relating the story of his conversion—the sunburst and the Voice from heaven. There are times when the first person singular pronoun can be used wisely and effectively: for "as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the face of his friend."[1]

It would be a hopeless task to indicate all the various sources of illustration; suffice it to say:

That the use of the imagination affords one of the legitimate and most effective means of throwing truth into bold relief; and

That the proper use of the imagination, with this

[1] I once said to General Booth: "You do not give your soldiers much training before they go out to preach." "No," said the general, "we simply say, Go and tell the next man you meet what God has done for you; simply relate your experience; you have nothing to do with arguments and difficulties; just tell whoever you can get to listen what Christ has done for you."—*Joseph Parker.*

end in view, is largely a matter of habit.[1] One can walk among the wonders of Nature as blind as Peter Bell, of whom Wordsworth wrote,

> "A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more;"

or he can hear voices and see visions which are imperceptible to the physical senses, as Longfellow did, to whom Nature appeared "kneeling, with folded hands, at evening prayer." One can read a book with no perception of anything except what is printed on its pages or, if he give play to his imagination, he can read ten times as much—and all true—between the lines.

For, really, a truth presented in outline is only partial truth and, therefore, not truth at all. He who would know the meaning of the Incarnation must fill out the silhouette presented in the Story of the Nativity. He who would understand the doctrine of the Atonement must read a thousand things between the lines of the Tragedy of the Cross. He who would learn how life and immortality are brought to light in the Gospel must see the narrow boundaries of the empty sepulchre in Joseph's garden open out and stretch away into a perspective of interminable vistas. This means that a wise preacher must not only use his imagination with effect but must cultivate it, and form the habit of using it; and must curb it withal; and must regard it as one of his homiletic assets to be wholly consecrated to the service of God.

[1] Yes, the faculty for picture making may be developed, and there are a great many men that haven't it, but could have it. It depends upon practice. It might come with difficulty and be slenderly successful at first, but may gain from year to year until it becomes quite natural.—*Beecher*.

III

HUMOUR IN THE PULPIT

OF all men a minister has least occasion to be melancholy. He may have a torpid liver and poor digestion, but he should make it clearly understood that these are not included in his "holy orders." For, indeed, he is a herald of the best news that ever fell on mortal ears.

It is possible, however, for a minister to carry his cheerfulness too far. One of my dearest friends is constantly getting into hot water because he habitually sees the humorous side of things. He could not possibly have kept his countenance at the funeral where it was announced that "the hymn about to be sung was written by the corpse." I know another, an incorrigible punster, who alienated one of the most useful spinsters in his congregation by telling her of a child that had been born half black: and when she asked, "What colour was the other half?" he answered, "That was black, too." It is rarely safe for a minister, as Holmes says, "to be as funny as he can."

In the ministrations of the pulpit particularly a sense of humour is a potent but dangerous gift.[1] It is serious

[1] One of the most useless modes of preaching is that which depends for the interest it excites upon the risible sensibilities; and the most offensive species of this genus of sermons is that which degrades the Bible to the antics of rhetorical buffoonery. —*Phelps*, "*Theory of Preaching.*"

business to be an ambassador of Christ. There is a mine of wisdom in Cowper's words:

"He that negotiates, between God and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
To court a grin when you should woo a soul;
To break a jest when pity should inspire
Pathetic exhortation; and address
The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
When sent with God's commission to the heart."

The world entertains a profound contempt for a clerical mountebank, however it may go in flocks to be amused by and applaud him. It was once the fashion to preach on such subjects as "The Snuffers of Divine Love," and "A Spiritual Mustard-Pot to Make the Soul Sneeze with Devotion" (Rev. John Stoughton, 1640). As late as 1819 a book was given to the English public by Rev. James Murray, entitled "Sermons to Asses, to Doctors of Divinity, to Lords Spiritual and Ministers of State." But fortunately that sort of sensational vulgarity is out of vogue.

I am not prepared to say, however, as some ministers seem to think, that humour has no place in the pulpit. To take that position is severely to discountenance some of the most devoted and successful preachers, such as Spurgeon, Joseph Parker, Henry Ward Beecher, DeWitt Talmage and Moody, all of whom made liberal use of humour in their presentation and application of gospel truth, yet usually without any loss of dignity or effectiveness.

In Paxton Hood's "Throne of Eloquence" he mildly characterizes as "not very eloquent" the following

paragraph from a sermon by the eccentric Rowland Hill: "I met a drove of pigs in one of the streets of a large town, and to my surprise they were not driven, but quietly followed their leader. This singular fact excited my curiosity; and I pursued the swine until they all quietly entered the butchery. I then asked the man how he succeeded in getting the poor, stupid, stubborn pigs so willingly to follow him, when he told me the secret. He had a basket of beans under his arm, and kept dropping them as he proceeded, and so secured his object. Ah, my dear hearers, the devil has got his basket of beans, and he knows how to suit his temptations to every sinner. He drops them by the way; the poor sinner is thus led captive by the devil at his own will; and if the grace of God prevent not, he will keep him forever." Yet Dr. Hood proceeds to say that this passage was the means of the conversion of "a man of culture, an officer home from the Indian service."

As for myself, much as I dislike vulgar buffoonery, I dislike dullness more. The former may be excused on the ground of ignorance or thoughtlessness, but the latter is inexcusable on any ground whatever. Better be Burns' ridiculous person,

> "... Clearin' the points o' faith
> Wi' rattlin' an' thumpin',
> Wi' stampin' an' jumpin',"

than Cowper's insufferable stupid, who

> "... Mounts the rostrum with a skip,
> Cries hem, and then skips down again,"

quite satisfied with having led his congregation into the pleasant confines of the Land of Nod.

But it is not necessary that one should be either. There are ministers who think that the only way to keep their "cloth" unsoiled is to preserve it in the doldrums, as housewives keep their woolens in moth-balls. This is a calamitous mistake. True piety is never melancholy. A pleasantry in the pulpit, on occasion, is not an unpardonable sin.

It was formerly the custom, particularly among the Puritan divines, to win attention at the outset of the sermon by some unusual, often grotesque twisting of the text. One of these, on Isaiah lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," presents the Lord as a huckster vending his wares at the corner of the streets: "Good people, what do you lack? What do you buy? Will you buy any balm of Gilead and eye-salve? Any myrrh, aloes, or cassia? Shall I fit you with a robe of righteousness or with a white raiment? Say, then, what is it you want? Here is a very choice armoury; shall I show you a helmet of salvation, a shield or a breastplate of faith? Will you please to walk in and see some precious stones? A jasper, a sapphire, or a chalcedony? Speak, what do you buy? What do you buy?"

This is not so bad as it might be. At any rate it probably made the congregation prick up their ears and attend to better things further on. Attention is a *sine qua non.* The preacher must catch his hare before he can cook it.

It needs to be borne in mind, however, in this connection, that the sublime and the ridiculous are always coterminous and not infrequently overlap. I once saw

an illustration of this in one of Dr. Parker's Thursday lectures. He was speaking of the incidental blessings of the Gospel, the light that radiates from the Cross even upon those who reject it. He dwelt on the indebtedness of the ungodly to the grace of God; set forth with great power the fact that infidels borrow from the arsenal of Christianity the very weapons which they use against it; made them out to be beneficiaries without gratitude and borrowers without thanks. At this point, lifting both his hands, he cried with a loud voice, "Stop, thief! Stop, thief!" The effect was like an electric shock. Men turned, following the speaker's gaze, to see if some veritable thief were fleeing down the centre aisle with an armful of valuables. In a moment came the revulsion; and a quiet ripple of laughter swept over the audience. I doubted at the time the value of this rhetorical maneuvre; yet I am conscious now, after an interval of years, that the incident served to impress upon my mind indelibly the important truth which Dr. Parker was trying to prove.

As to the use of satire, there are occasions when nothing else will answer. There are cases which can be adequately met only by laughing them out of court.[1] Witness the derisive speech of Elijah at the Lord's controversy on Carmel. The four hundred and fifty priests of Baal have been vainly calling on their god to

[1] A volume of reasoning may be condensed into a keen retort; and the absurdity of an opponent's statements or logic may be exposed by an impromptu jest more effectually than by a series of syllogisms. Many a fallacy has been pricked to death by the needle of ridicule, which the club of logic has thumped in vain.—*Matthews*, "*Oratory and Orators.*"

consume the bullock on his altar: "Cry aloud!" shouts Elijah, "cry aloud! For he is a god. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey; or, peradventure, he sleepeth and must be awaked!"

We have another instance in Samson's alliterative battle-song, after slaying the Philistines: "With the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain them! One heap, two heaps, asses on asses, masses on masses, a thousand men!"

In all literature there is no more effective instance of satire than Isaiah's description of the making of an idol. He takes us out into the woods with the carpenter to select a suitable log—"a log that will not rot"—then into the shop, where he measures the timber and saws it asunder—for his god must not be too tall to pass under the lintel—and then proceeds with ax and chisel "to fashion it like a man." In the midst of his work, overcome with hunger, he pauses to kindle a fire out of a portion of the log, rubbing his hands, and saying, "Aha, I am warm!" Then prostrating himself before the remainder he prays, "Deliver me, for Thou art my God!"

The *reductio ad absurdum* is humour at its best in argument. How Thomas Carlyle revelled in it! Where will you find anything finer than his treatment of the Darwinian hypothesis. "*Omnia ex conchis!*" he exclaims. "All things from a clam-shell! The religion of dirt! The religion of frog-spawn!"

It is an open question how far the pulpit should meet, in serious argument, such fatuous propositions as are advanced in Christian Science, theosophy, spiritualism, papal infallibility, Protestant sacerdotalism, *et cetera.* The pulpit must surely never descend to

billingsgate or vulgarity of any sort; but there is a wisdom of the serpent which, cooing like a dove, pierces error with a mortal sting.[1]

But humour for its own sake has never a place in the pulpit. The work is too serious, the issues involved are too vast and far-reaching. We are ambassadors of Christ, under orders to destroy the works of the devil and build up a kingdom of righteousness on earth. To this end the Cross is our constant theme, and our one weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

It is better to save a soul from death than to be known the world over as a great preacher. It is better to help a single soul in trouble than to entertain ten thousand. The court jester has his place; but Christ's fishermen have little use for cap and bells.

[1] We call him a humourist who, like Cervantes, can shatter to pieces an already diseased and dying error; like Richter, distil from laughter the wisdom of the universe; or, like Chaucer, paint life-portraits of such true beauty as to last through all time.—*Hood, "Vocation of the Preacher."*

PART FIFTH

The Delivery of the Sermon

I

METHOD OF DELIVERY

A SERMON is not finished until it reaches its destination; and its efficiency depends, in large measure, on the way the preacher delivers it. "The end crowns the work." It is related that, on a certain occasion when a young member of the Corps Legislatif had made a dismal failure of his maiden speech, the great Mirabeau volunteered to deliver the same speech, and did so, word for word, making a notable success of it.

There are four ways of delivering a sermon.

First: from manuscript.

This, however, is rather reading than preaching. In any case it is not oratory. But one who prefers this method is bound to do his best with it.

(1) He should know how to read well.

(2) He should have his manuscript so clearly written or, preferably, typewritten that he need not blunder through it.

(3) He should make himself so thoroughly familiar with it by reading and rereading that, being saturated with it, he may as far as possible lose himself in the ardour of preaching it.

(4) At the appointed time he should stand up, throw his shoulders back and preach. One objection to the manuscript, as stated by James G. Blaine, is that it "acts as a non-conductor between the preacher and his congregation." This difficulty becomes fatal to success

when the preacher bends over his manuscript and mumbles it.

(5) He should keep his eyes on his hearers. Just how that can be done with a written sermon surpasses my power of suggestion; but it must be done. For attention is largely kept up through the eyes. "Look on us!" said John and Peter to the cripple at the Gate Beautiful before they healed him. It is recorded that when Jesus preached in the old home church at Nazareth "the eyes of all were fastened upon Him."

(6) He should be so master of himself as to forget himself. The great secret of success in the pulpit is to lose sight of everything but one's message, the divine message, the life-giving message which we are under bonds to deliver to needy souls in the name and under the commission of the living God.

Second: from a "brief."

This is the slipshod plan. It is, on the one hand, open to substantially all the objections urged against the use of manuscript and, on the other, reaps none of the real advantage of the extempore plan. If a man can swim at all he ought to be able to swim without the aid of bladders. The fact that a preacher can improvise between his "notes" is proof conclusive that, with a little more labour, he could wholly dispense with them. Why not take time to memorize the brief and so get along without it?

Third: the memoriter method.

This is open to still graver objections. To begin with it involves an unwise and unnecessary expenditure of purely mechanical brain-force in learning by rote. This is not worth while; for the result, after all, is not preaching but reciting, not oratory but declamation. In one of Fenelon's *Dialogues sur l'Eloquence* he says,

"What eloquence is that of a man whose hearer knows beforehand all his expressions and all his moving appeals? A likely way, indeed, to surprise, to astonish, to soften, to convince and to persuade men! A strange method of concealing art and letting nature speak! For my part, I say frankly that all this offends me. What, shall a steward of the mysteries of God be an idle declaimer, jealous of his reputation and ambitious of vain pomp? Shall he not venture to speak of God to his people without having arranged all his words and learned, like a schoolboy, his lesson by heart?"

I have known more than one promising young preacher to be worn out in the frightful grind of memorizing two sermons a week. I have known others more fortunate who, beginning in this way and growing thin and desperate in the effort to keep it up, have at length cut loose and found an immeasurable joy in free preaching. But for those who insist on pursuing this plan there are certain conditions which must be observed.

(1) They should know how to declaim and declaim well.

(2) They should see to it that the sermon is memorized perfectly. Otherwise there will be such awkward and painful pauses as used to occur on Friday afternoon at school when a youthful Demosthenes "forgot his piece."[1]

[1] Few men can memorize with facility, and fewer can be sure of finding at a moment's notice what they have thus stored away. There is always the danger of forgetting. Memory is as cranky as an automobile. A child cries, the fire engine rattles by, a restless auditor drops a hymn-book, something out of the ordinary occurs, the speaker's mind is diverted, he misses a word or two, loses his grip on himself, and the rest of the discourse is irretrievably ditched. It is a laborious and dangerous method.—*Nichols*, "*Preaching.*"

(3) Room should be left, if possible, for improvisation; when the speaker can stand aside for a moment and reason freely with his hearers. This will give him a breathing spell; and increasing practice may lead on to independence and a permanent release from his memoriter ball-and-chain.

(4) The work of committing to memory should be so well done that the preacher will be absolutely free from all conscious effort to recollect; otherwise he cannot deliver his message with effect. *Hilariter* is a good word for the pulpit. Freely, joyously, without the hindrance of the least self-consciousness, leaning hopefully on an almighty arm, filled with the enthusiasm of the divinely-struck moment, thrilled through and through with the life-giving truth of his message and longing to make every hearer see it as he sees it—so should the preacher preach. Therefore, whatever his mode of preparation and delivery, he should above all things trust God and let go!

Fourth: without notes, but after full preparation.

This method is the one which is coming more and more into favour in these days. The drift of current sentiment is indubitably against the manuscript. One of the questions almost invariably asked by pastoral committees with respect to a candidate is, "Does he read his sermons?" It may be, as frequently asserted, that "some preachers do best one way and some another"; the fact remains nevertheless that a minister is handicapped by his manuscript, certainly unless he can on occasion do without it.[1]

[1] The extemporaneous discourse has the advantage of alertness. It gives a sense of liveliness. It is more immediately striking. It possesses more activity and warmth. It conveys

Joseph Parker says: "For many years I have been unable to agree with my brethren as to the proper definition of preaching. In consequence of this disagreement as to definition I have heard men praised as preachers whom I do not regard as preachers at all. From my own point of view they were vigorous readers of admirable essays, but they had no right or title to be regarded as preachers. In my judgment there is all the difference in the world between reading and preaching. The reader stands at a distance from the hearer; the preacher goes down to the hearer and talks to him directly and, as it were, personally. The reader may be reading something six months or six years old, whereas the preacher speaks to the immediate moment and the immediate environment."

As to the correctness of this dictum, there may be a difference of opinion; but there is no room for any such difference as to current taste and popular demand.[1]

an idea of steadiness and readiness, of poise and self-possession, even to the most rude perceptions. Men have an admiration for it, as indicating a mastery of powers and an independence of artificial helps. A rough backwoodsman in Virginia heard Bishop Meade preach an extemporaneous sermon, and, being somewhat familiar with the ways of the Episcopal Church, he said, "he liked him. He was the first one he ever saw of those petticoat fellows that could shoot without a rest."—*Phillips Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching."*

[1] The demand for extempore preaching is not peculiar to our time. In looking over a volume of the *Edinburgh Review* for 1802 I have come upon these words: "Pulpit discourses have insensibly dwindled from speaking to reading; a practice of itself sufficient to stifle every germ of eloquence. It is only by the fresh feelings of the heart that mankind can be very powerfully affected. What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation, and fervour of a week old; turning over whole pages of violent passions written out in

Wherefore, if for no better reason, it is the part of wisdom for young ministers to cultivate the habit of preaching without paper. I do not believe, what is so often said, that in some cases this is impossible. Any man who is able to write sermons and read them can preach without reading, if he is willing to meet the necessary conditions.

The first prerequisite to preaching of this sort is that the minister shall have something to say.

It is much easier to beat the air with a parchment scroll than with an empty hand. In the seclusion of his study one can easily write thirty pages of charming rhetoric on The Ethical Suggestion of the Iota Subscript, but to stand up face to face and eye to eye with a congregation of immortal men and women and say these things *ore rotundo* is another matter. The difference is like that between a disquisition on caloric and an alarm of fire. An essayist may have a message or not, as he pleases; but a paperless preacher will fail utterly unless he has something to say.

The second condition of success is faithful preparation.

I do not like the word "extempore," still less "im-

German text; reading the tropes and apostrophes into which he is hurried by the ardour of his mind; and so affected at a preconcerted line and page that he can proceed no further!— It is commonly answered to any animadversions upon the eloquence of the English pulpit, that a clergyman is to recommend himself not by his eloquence, but by the purity of his life and the soundness of his doctrine; an objection good enough, if any connection could be pointed out between eloquence and heresy; but if it is possible for a man to live well, teach well, and preach well at the same time, such objections resting only upon a supposed incompatibility of these good qualities are duller than the dullness they defend."

promptu," in connection with preaching.[1] The man who supposes that he can satisfy an audience of thinking people with an improvisation is a poor student of human nature and deserves to fail. We are living in strenuous times; energy is concentrated; two-hour sermons have followed the hand-loom and the stage-coach into innocuous desuetude. The people who come to church nowadays want to hear a message, a message on vital truth, a message without verbose circumlocution, quick, earnest, from a hot heart and an active brain to a personal conscience. They are too busy to lend an ear to offhand fluency "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

It is the custom of some ministers to use a manuscript in the morning and preach without notes in the evening. In some cases they put the week's work on the written sermon and scurry about for the other; and then they wonder why their second service is a failure! Let them reverse the process and mark the result. Our congregations know when dribblings are set before them. All homiletic goods are "marked in plain figures"; and the people naturally appraise our sermons at the value which we ourselves put upon them.

It may be a good plan, at times, particularly for a young minister, to preach a written sermon at one service and an unwritten sermon at the other; *but if any discrimination is made in point of labour between the two, the latter should always have the benefit of it.*

[1] You know Sheridan's famous remark: "The gentleman relies on his memory for his wit, and on his imagination for his facts." That was thought to have been spontaneous; but there were, after his death, found among his papers as many as thirty different versions of it.—*Beecher.*

In the preparation of a sermon intended to be delivered without notes, there are three important points:

(1) The skeleton should be thoroughly wrought out. The theme, the proposition *quod erat demonstrandum*, the various steps in the coherent train of thought, with such illustrations as may be necessary to illuminate them, should be well in hand at the outset. Gather up the lines before you undertake to drive.

(2) The discourse should be carefully written out. This is necessary, not only in order to fasten the argument, but to prevent "branching" and unprofitable prolixity.[1] It frequently happens that what seemed important before being written takes on a very different aspect when put into cold black and white.

(3) Then cast the manuscript aside and review the entire line of thought until it is photographed distinctly on the memory. Do not memorize the manuscript. The important matter is to know precisely what one wants to say. We have a truth to demonstrate; let us demonstrate it. We have a moral precept to enforce; let us enforce it. We have a path to pursue; let us pursue it. We have a destination to reach; let us get there.

This means work: but work tells. It is much harder to do well without a manuscript than with it; but success means more in the end. *Opus finis coronat.* A young minister who sets out to read one sermon and

[1] It is well for the young preacher to keep up the habit of writing, with whatever of skill, elegance, and force he can command. Reading will put words of beauty and power into our hands; careful writing separates, signalizes, infixes them and makes them our possession forever. The pen gives march to the mind. It teaches exactness, discrimination, and helps the whole constructive faculty.—*Storrs.*

preach another without a manuscript on each Sabbath, taking at least as much pains with the latter as with the former, bending all his energies to the object in view, patiently persisting, undaunted by an occasional failure, is certain sooner or later to dispose of his manuscript as a growing child does of its leading strings.

The third essential factor in the problem is self-forgetfulness.

The great advantage of the unread sermon is that it permits an absolute abandon.[1] The manuscript is not only a non-conductor between the speaker and his audience, it is a grave distraction to the speaker himself.[2] Here also is the chief objection to preaching *memoriter;* the effort to remember is a diversion. When the preacher rises to his task, nothing should stand between him and the matter in hand. He should be so entirely

[1] I think I started Storrs preaching extemporaneously. He was going to give an address at Princeton and another at Amherst, and he was complaining that he did not feel well; it was in the summer, and he had not anything ready for Amherst or for Princeton. I said, "Storrs, I think you're foolish; what do you want to write for? Get the gauge of your subject, and take your luck. You can't do worse than fail, and that won't be very much. Go ahead." He said, "I've a good mind to try it." I said, "Try." So he went up there, and he gave an extemporaneous speech. I don't know as the Connecticut Valley has done echoing that speech yet. It was a wonder. Every one was surprised with the grandeur of the speech. It was a great effort. It was the triumph of spontaneity.—*Interview with Beecher.*

[2] The extemporaneous preacher is, more than any other, *en rapport* with his hearers. They realize that he is saying what he feels at the time, not something which he felt days before and embalmed in his manuscript or his memory. Their thirsty minds respond with eager attention, when offered a draught, not from a bottle of carbonated emotions, but from the bubbling spring.—*Nichols, "Preaching."*

the master of his argument that he can forget himself wholly in the presentation of it. The moment he thinks of his voice or gesture, the moment he consciously tries to remember, the spell is broken. He is like an engine drawing a loaded train on an up-grade; all goes well until a moment of self-consciousness breaks the coupling; the attention flags and he finds himself alone on his engine while his train is at the foot of the hill.

Let yourself go! Run with your message! You have done your best in honest preparation; now trust in God.

> "Our doubts are traitors,
> And make us lose the good we oft might win,
> By fearing to attempt."

We are all too apt to forget the divine factor in our work. God has distinctly promised to help the preacher who has helped himself, in the delivery of his discourse. The Holy Spirit, of whom we have received our message, is with us as we deliver it; He stands beside us. In this, as elsewhere, we are "labourers together with God." The yoke is for two. It is not I who preach, but God and I. We can trust Him for strength, but only when we throw ourselves upon Him.

There is a world of meaning for us—who ever stand in the pulpit before powers adverse to truth,—in such assurances as these: "It is not ye that speak but the Spirit of your Father," and "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

The fourth essential is: Don't be discouraged by failure. "Tumble me down," sings old Robert Herrick, "and I will sit triumphant on my ruins yet!" I know of a preacher who failed repeatedly in his endeavour to

preach extempore and yet made good and did it splendidly before he was through with it. One Sunday at the close of service as he joined his wife, who was mortified by a worse failure than usual on his part, she said, "Now, I do hope you're satisfied." His answer was, "Yes, I am. I am satisfied that I've done my worst. From this time on I'm bound to grow better and better." And he did. If you fail, up and at it again! Don't be a quitter. Don't give up. Believe in yourself;[1] and better still believe in God.

> **"If thou canst plan a noble deed,**
> **And never flag till it succeed,**
> **Thine hour will come. Go on, true soul;**
> **Thou'lt reach the goal!"**

In any case let us, as ministers, remember that we are not our own but God's men, not doing our own but God's work. Wherefore "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever."

[1] It is related that, at the close of our Civil War, while the unsuccessful attempt to capture the city of Charleston was under discussion by a group of naval veterans, Admiral Dupont gave a considerable number of reasons for his failure to pass the Confederate batteries; whereupon Rear-Admiral Porter said, "There's one reason you haven't given, Dupont; you didn't believe you could do it."

II

IMPEDIMENTA

THE world is to be saved under God by "the foolishness of preaching." The phrase is significant. The foolishness referred to is not in the substance of preaching, since that is intrinsically "the wisdom and power of God." It must be, then, in the preacher, and in his method of presenting truth.

Our ministry offers an inestimable coign of vantage. It is the *puo-sto* for which Archimedes longed that he might move the world. But are we making the most of it? Is our whole power put upon the long arm of the lever? Is the influence of our preaching what it ought to be? If not, what hinders? Many things hinder. I venture to indicate some of them. It is not necessary that a man should be eight feet high in order to write a disquisition on the children of Anak.

But there is so much to be said that one scarcely knows where to begin. Of course we ministers are hampered, at the outset, by our personal infirmities; such as indolence, lack of consecration, and frequent unwillingness to be led and governed by the Holy Spirit. We are hindered also by our narrow views of spiritual truth, our bigotries and prejudices, our self-assurance, our shallow knowledge of Scripture, our inexperience, our worldliness, our neglect of prayer, our default in pastoral faithfulness. But these are not the *impedimenta* to which reference is now made; some,

rather, which are less excusable but respecting which there is more likely to be a difference of opinion.

1. "*The cloth.*" We, by your leave, are "the cloth." The phrase is abominably expressive. It is a sad comment on human nature and things generally that the most sacred of professions should be thus characterized by its livery. Garb is more than godliness to the looker-on in Vienna. And unfortunately we lend ourselves to the calumny. The minister of Christ should be, above all, a man among men. Why, then, does he wear frontlets and phylacteries; or, to be more accurate, a vest buttoned high? Why the "clerical cut"? Is it to publish a holy separation? The Hebrew word for separateness is *pharash*, from which, Pharisaism. Why should clothiers furnish us with "garments made after the most approved clerical pattern at ten per cent. off"? Are we any the less men because we are ministers? "Holy orders," indeed! If we are bound to put on sanctimonious airs, we should find some better way. Time was when the priest wore a white tunic from neck to ankles, with a girdle of blue and scarlet, and a tall tiara on his head; but we are come upon better days. Priest is not "presbyter writ large." A presbyter is something less and something more than a priest of the olden time.

The "clerical cut" means, I suppose, that we are to walk apart in an atmosphere of peculiar sanctity or authority, or both: as if to say, "Stand aside; for I am holier than thou." There may occasionally be truth in that; but the salt and light of a godly walk and conversation go further in evidence than a shovel hat. There are wiser ways of proving ourselves in the apostolic succession.

The Carpenter at Nazareth, so far as known, made no change in His wardrobe when He gave up handicraft for homiletics. And the fishermen who followed Him would have cut a sorry figure in a clerical outfit. Influence is better than authority, ten times over; and influence is just as great in hodden gray as in

"Silken coats and caps and golden rings,
With ruffs and cuffs and farthingales and things."

2. The pulpit. This is a relic of medieval pietism, and altogether a superannuated superfluity. The wonder is that the ministry of Christ, swathed in mortuary byssus and boxed up in an ossuary, should have so long kept its name to live. Nowhere else are logic, eloquence, flashing eye and earnest voice so handicapped.

It is the strange misfortune of the ministry to have borrowed its name from these ill-born and unshriven twins—the Cloth and the Pulpit. Thus Cowper,

"The pulpit, therefore, (and I name it, filled
With solemn awe that bids me well beware
With what intent I touch that holy thing!)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support and ornament of virtue's cause."

How and where did it originate—this cage, this palisade, this homiletic refrigerator? In the time of Nehemiah? Oh, no. The alleged "pulpit" which he erected by the water-gate was merely "migdol," *i. e.*, a raised platform. And there is no other mention of "the pulpit" in Holy Writ. In point of fact, the origin of this thing was contemporaneous with the clerical arrogance which ushered in the darkest period

of church history. It marked with a peculiar emphasis the increasing dignity and pretension of "His Reverence" over the unshod people. The platform was too low; it was raised higher and higher on the cathedral pillar, as clerical dignity went up; and it must needs be fenced around, lest the incumbent should fall out.[1]

But why should we perpetuate it? The minister of Christ has long since found his proper level. His medieval grandeur is gone. Let us be thankful that he is no longer regarded as "a little tin god on wheels."

The pulpit has this triple excuse for being: (1) It holds a manuscript; which it has no business to do. (2) It hides the preacher's inferior parts, on the false assumption that the congregation takes no pleasure in the legs of a consecrated man. And (3) it exalts and separates the preacher from his flock. He stands before them like an angel leaning out of a balcony. But this is precisely what he should not seem to be. For, in the logic of events, he no longer "sits on a hill retired, in thoughts more elevate," but has come down among the people. This is the mind of the Master; He became one among us that He might win us.

3. *The manuscript.* Preaching is oratory conse-

[1] On a little narrow platform one can walk backward and forward, to be sure; but if he go towards the edges ever so little he is in fear of stumbling off. Yet even that is better than a box-pulpit. What has that to do with preaching? What do you want with it? What is it for? This evil is not confined to pulpits merely, but to all places where a speaker has to address a large body of men. I think the matter so important that I tell the truth and lie not when I say that I would not accept a settlement in a very advantageous place if I was obliged to preach out of one of those old-fashioned swallow's nests on the wall.—*Beecher, "Yale Lectures."*

crated to God. Reading is not oratory. Not that many of the most distinguished and successful preachers have not read their sermons, such as Gregory, Augustine, Chrysostom, Baxter, Edward Payson, and Jonathan Edwards. But were they great by reason of their manuscript, or in spite of it?[1]

The main objection to extempore preaching is that it affords room for indefinite indolence and slovenly work. Professor Porson, in contrasting the two forensic masters of England, said: "Mr. Pitt conceives his sentences as he utters them, while Mr. Fox throws himself into the midst of his, and leaves it to the Almighty to get him out." The fact is, however, that Pitt made

[1] The practice of the early Church is clearly against the manuscript; and it was not introduced into the pulpit until the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The practice seems to have originated in the reign of Henry VIII, and subsequently increased in the Church of England; considerable prejudice being created against extemporaneous preaching because the Independents and Puritans were generally given to it. Charles II, however, attempted to correct this method; and a very curious letter was sent at his direction to the clergymen in the English Church providing that the practice of reading sermons be wholly laid aside. The effort failed, however, and the use of the manuscript continued in the Church of England. At the same time, however, it was rarely employed upon the Continent. Some of those who in later times were accustomed to read in the earlier parts of their ministry regretted the practice. Jonathan Edwards in his later life declared in favour of memoriter preaching, or even actual extemporizing. Dr. Chalmers, who thought himself unable to extemporize and always used a manuscript, found that it was impossible for him to employ notes when he was addressing the operatives in the outskirts of the city of Glasgow, and Dr. Hanna testifies that Chalmers' sermons to these plain people were more effective and more truly eloquent than those which he delivered with so much applause in his own great church.—*Breed, "Preparing to Preach."*

laborious preparation before he trusted to the moment for his sentence; Fox also delved while others slept, and then pursued on a low plain the highest method, to wit: "When ye are brought before kings and rulers trust to me, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay."

What is preaching? It is jury-pleading. Our client is Jesus of Nazareth; our case, "This Jesus is the Christ"; our jury, the people; our purpose, to convince them.

We are, in this view, too scrupulous about our rhetoric. If theological essays were thunderbolts, we would all be Boanerges. It is the truth, not its clothing, that saves and sanctifies. The more simple and direct, the better. It does not follow that because God led the children of Israel "around by the way of the wilderness" into the Promised Land, we are to do likewise. Listen to this: "The incomprehensibility of the apparatus developed in the machinery of the universe may be considered a supereminent manifestation of stupendous majesties, whether a man stands upon the platform of his own mind and ponders scrutinizingly on its undecipherable characters, or looks abroad over the magnificent equipments and regalities of nature, surveying its amplitudes in all their scope and its unfathomabilities in all their profundity."[1] What was this preacher trying to say? This: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the sun and the moon which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" Then why not say it?

The manuscript must be held in large measure re-

[1] Quoted by Paxton Hood in his "Throne of Eloquence."

sponsible for this sort of thing. Fine writing, well-turned periods, sesquipedalian phrases. Words! Words! A wilderness of words! And somewhere at the centre a kernel of truth, like Gratiano's "two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff. You shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have them, they are not worth the search."

The man who habitually uses a manuscript in the pulpit confronts an almost irresistible temptation to make for himself a reputation as a clever rhetorician, a philosopher, a master of profundities and sublimities. The Gospel is as plain and straightforward as the king's highway. Profundity is mud: and it is much easier to be mired with a manuscript than without it. Herbert Spencer defines life to be "a definite combination of heterogeneous changes both simultaneous and successive in correspondence with external co-existences and sequences." He wrote that; otherwise he never could have said it.

Thomas Carlyle has this to say of the preacher: "Of all public functionaries boarded and lodged on the industry of modern Europe, is there one worthier of the board he has—a man ever professing, and never so languidly making, still endeavouring to save the souls of men? But I wish he could find the point again, this speaking one, and stick to it with deadly energy; for there is need of him yet."

Aye, need of him yet and need of him always, until the last sinner bows the knee to Christ. But no need of a preacher or a sermon without point. Let us get back again to the root meaning of *sermo:* it is "a thrust"; a thrust with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

PART SIXTH

Getting Attention

I

DULLNESS

DULLNESS is our besetting sin. "Shame on ye," said a Scotch preacher to one of his nodding auditors; "dinna ye see that even Jamie Frazer, the ediot, is awake?" Whereupon up spake Jamie, "Aye, minister: an' if I was na an ediot I wad be sleepin' too, the noo." A wise reproof; for not infrequently the wonder is not that the wits of our people sometimes go wool-gathering but that they ever abide at home.

A young theologue after preaching his trial sermon at Andover asked Dr. Edwards Park what he would suggest as a closing prayer; the ready reply was, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Another, on a like occasion, asked, "What was your opinion of my train of thought?" and was answered, "Your train lacked nothing but a sleeping car." Still another asked, "What did you regard as my best passage?" to which the professor answered, "Your passage from the pulpit to the door."

We have no business to be dull. The preacher who cannot get and hold attention is like a fisherman who sits contentedly on the bank while his hook is caught in the overhanging limb of a tree. He might as well quit fishing, *i. e.*, turn from preaching to peddling maps.

How shall we account for it?

It is related of Alexander Pope that, in one of his better moods—which were seldom enough—he betook himself one Sabbath to a church in the Strand in the hope of hearing some heavenly truth that might sweeten the depths of his cynical life. But, as ill chance would have it, a distinguished theologian discoursed that day at such length on one of the many impertinent profundities, that the poet fidgeted and fumed with impatience, vainly racking his brain for means of respectable escape, until—giving himself over to the inevitable —he invoked his old-time muse (always an irreverent jade) and wrote on the fly-leaf of a prayer-book this stanza—which is not to be found in his published works —

> "I whisper, gracious God,
> What have I done to merit such a rod;
> That all this shot of dullness now should be
> From this, thy blunderbuss, discharged on me?"

The name of the reverend "blunderbuss" who discoursed on this occasion is withheld, for obvious reasons. Possibly it was the court chaplain or the Right Reverend the Archbishop of Canterbury, or—since even Apollo was once caught napping—George Whitefield, who was just then the lion of London. But I would rather believe it was some venerable Dry-as-dust whose sole renown is embalmed, like a fly in amber, in the historic fact that, on the Sabbath referred to, he discharged, as probably his custom was, a shot of dullness from his homiletic bow. Let it suffice for our comfort that there are no such preachers in our time! With what eagerness do the multitudes now betake themselves to the sanctuary, saying:

"How pleased and blest am I
To hear the people cry,
'Come, let us worship God to-day!'"

And with what rapt attention do they regard the anointed Son of Thunder as he sets forth breathing thoughts in burning words! I am constrained to confess that one preacher, to whom I am habitually forced to listen, seems sometimes as dull as a beetle droning on a summer's night; but this will probably be regarded as an exceptional case. Let us congratulate ourselves that Pope's anointed hypnotist is, as they say, "a back number"; but before finally dismissing this reverend brother of the Strand let us raise the inquiry, by way of philosophic reminiscence: Why was he dull?

1. *Was it because his hearers, Pope included, were dull?* In fact no audience is ever overeager to hear spiritual truth. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." In view of this fact it is not to be wondered at that a moving-picture show or a "sacred" concert is more popular than preaching. This does not mean that we are to abandon preaching for vaudeville, but that we are somehow to give zest to it.

The average hearer is also averse to thinking. He wants to be entertained rather than to be argued with. This means not that we are to give up argument for story-telling, but that our argument must be clothed in presentable and captivating garb. It is related that once when Chrysostom, the man with the golden lips, perceived that he had lost the ears of his congregation he recovered them by calling attention to a swinging lamp; but the reference would have been merely a distraction had it not borne directly on the matter in

hand.[1] In any case when the people nod it devolves upon the preacher to somehow wake them up.

2. Or perhaps the subject under treatment was dull.

(1) The preacher may have chosen a proposition too large for him; in which case he is likely to sympathize with the boy who, being obliged to wear his father's coat, said that he "felt lonesome" in it.

(2) Or it may have been too small. There is a disposition on the part of some preachers, in their eagerness to avoid the commonplace, to select some point so infinitesimal as to have escaped notice, and then to dilate and "enlarge upon it." As a rule, this is a tiresome job. I preached on "Selah" once; once was enough for me. Probably my congregation felt the same way.[2]

[1] Emanuel Deutsch, in his paper on the Talmud, recites from that wonderful collection of ancient Hebrew traditions the story of an old Jewish preacher who, in the course of a hot Eastern afternoon, while he was expounding some intricate subtlety of the law, beheld his hearers quietly fall away in drowsy slumbers. Suddenly he burst forth, "There was once a woman in Egypt who brought forth at a birth six hundred thousand men!" We may fancy how the audience started at this remarkable tale. Very quickly the preacher proceeded: "Her name was Jochebed; she was the mother of Moses, who was worth as much as all those six hundred thousand armed men put together who went up out of the land of Egypt." His hearers slept no more that afternoon.—*Hood, "Throne of Eloquence."*

[2] Paxton Hood presents a list of small subjects which were seriously treated by Escobar, such as these:

"How many keys gave Christ to Peter?"

"What became of the Ark of the Covenant at the first destruction of Jerusalem?"

"Was the grief of Our Lady at the crucifixion greater or less than her joy at the resurrection?"

"Why is God three Persons rather than four or five or any

(3) Or his theme may have been in negative form. This is always a mistake. Doubt is never interesting, because it is so commonplace. Men would rather watch an architect than a house-wrecker at his work; unless the latter uses dynamite. An infidel draws better than a sceptic because his methods are so violently bold. If a preacher abandons his faith, he can best fill his church not by lifting his eyebrows or questioning but by saying squarely, "I don't believe this or that."

(4) Or the subject under consideration may have been too abstruse. Was the preacher discoursing on "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute"? Too deep! People want truth that can be translated into the terms of common life. They come to church because they are thirsty for the water of life: when they get an unsatisfying portion they are left, like the Ancient Mariner, lamenting,

> "Water, water everywhere,
> And all the boards did shrink:
> Water, water everywhere,
> Nor any drop to drink."

(5) Or the theme may have been commonplace. The fact that a subject is old is nothing against it, providing it be reviewed from a new standpoint or clothed in unusual garb. In fact such themes as God, The Incarnation, The Atonement, Immortality, Heaven, The

other number; particularly as musicians account three an imperfect number?"

"Who governed heaven when God was in the Virgin's womb?"

"The rib of Adam having belonged to both Adam and Eve, which will have it at the resurrection?"

Reunion of Saints, are always new to many and fresh to all when properly presented. But they are hopelessly dull when set forth by a dull man in a dull way.

3. The dullness may have been in the treatment of the theme.

(1) The sermon may have been too long drawn out. Not a few preachers are criticized for "lacking terminal facilities." Paul was a great preacher; but the Scripture does not vouch for his wisdom under all circumstances, as witness this: "And when the disciples were come together at Troas to break bread, he preached unto them and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together (which probably means that the ventilation was bad). And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead." Not many overlong sermons are followed by such fatal consequences; but usually they do induce drowsiness. Far be it from me to advocate "sermonettes"; but there is a just limit, and he is a wise man who knows when to leave off. Luther's rule is good as far as it goes:

> "Begin low,
> Speak slow,
> Rise higher,
> Take fire,
> When most impressed
> Be self-possessed,"

but it is incomplete without this addition:

> When done,
> Sit down.

(2) Perhaps there was too much logic; with no appeal to the imagination or the emotions. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

(3) Or perhaps there was too little logic. Jack may weary of play: better give his brain something to do.

(4) Possibly there was a superflux of rhetoric. Well rounded periods, sonorous and melodious, "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null" are as hypnotic as soothing syrup.[1] I can imagine a preacher saying: "If any person in this distinguished assemblage is sincerely desirous of avoiding the otherwise inevitable doom of the incorrigibly impenitent and of attaining the full measure of ethical self-respect here and the consummation of felicity hereafter, it behooves him to yield, without further demur or procrastination, an intellectual assent to the elemental postulates of the Gospel and to receive cordially the gratuitous offer of the remission of sins": but how much more interesting to say, "He that believeth shall be saved."

(5) Or the sermon may have been monotonous; in which case the complement of a monotonous delivery would produce an ideal lullaby. Prosing in the pulpit means dozing in the pews. Study variety; in the selection of your themes, in your treatment, in your delivery, every way.

[1] How calming the effect of words like those with which De Quincy broke it gently to his cook that she had ruined his roast by cross-cut carving: "Owing to dyspepsia affecting my system and the possibility of additional derangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing may arise, so much so indeed as to cause nervous irritation and prevent my attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal rather than in longitudinal form."

(6) Or it may have lacked application; not the "practical application" of the peroration, but the close and immediate bearing on life which should run all through it. Jonah might have stood on a street-corner in Nineveh and preached till doomsday on the Metaphysics of Sin without a hearing; but when he cried over and over, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed!" the people turned and listened and went home to put on sackcloth. It is only when we present truth in terms translatable into life that we get a hearing or deserve it.

Objective truth is like a life-boat; pleasing enough as it hangs upon the davits, but ineffective until one gets into it. When one's appreciative hearers stop after church to say, "That was a beautiful sermon," the preacher may be pretty well assured that he has missed the mark. If we must shorten our sermons, as they do say, the place to do this is at the inane beginning and not at the practical and profitable end. Preaching is not fencing: the sword must not be unsheathed and brandished; it must be driven home.

4. The dullness may have been due to the fact that the preacher was a dull man. I have heard of a traveller who saw no wonders in the Yosemite. But it is the business of the preacher in his personally conducted tour along the picturesque roads of gospel truth to stir all sluggish souls. If he himself is but a hireling, discharging a perfunctory duty with a heart unmoved, what then?

In the Parable of the Good Shepherd the sheep are deaf to the hireling's voice. An unmagnetized bar of steel draws no iron filings. The secret of pulpit power is the vitalizing, energizing touch of the Spirit. He who feels the truth can make others feel it.

We have an idea that the people who stay away from church have no interest in spiritual things. This is doubtless true in many cases but not always so. Suppose we inquire within.

Suggestions

(1) The preacher's dullness may be constitutional; this, however, does not absolve him from the responsibility of getting rid of it. We all have blood disorders. Our hardest grapple is with our delinquent great-great-grandparents who by eating sour grapes set the teeth of coming generations on edge; but heredity surrenders to brave men. Even the phlegmatic can wake up.

(2) But suppose the minister is simply lacking in ministerial zeal? This is a graver difficulty, and nothing but heroic treatment can reach it. Doubt is probably at the root of the matter; doubt of the great verities which are the preacher's stock in trade; doubt as to the personality of God, or the virgin birth of Jesus, or the vicarious atonement, or the resurrection; or as to the authority of the Word which underlies them all. In this case the man in the pulpit would do well to get down on his knees and "do the first works" over again. "Zeal" is from *zeein*, meaning to boil. Water does not boil without fire; and there is no baptism of fire except from the Spirit of God.

(3) The preacher may, however, be loyal to truth and righteousness yet lack interest in his particular theme. Then, surely, his theme is ill chosen and he would do better to drop it. It is always unwise and unwarrantable to preach beyond the measure of one's faith. "The value of great preaching," says Paxton Hood, "depends on the measure in which it represents

the preacher's own familiarity with truth,—this is the preaching which searches Jerusalem with candles."

(4) It is for lack of constant, personal contact with the Infinite that we preachers are ever dull. O Spirit of God, baptize us with fire and power! Send us to our pulpits, as Moses went into the Egyptian court, straight from the vision of the burning bush, with the message "I AM THAT I AM hath sent me unto you"!

II

SENSATIONALISM

THE preacher must have the attention of his audience or his preaching will be as unprofitable as baying the moon or sowing sand or whistling jigs to a mile-stone. In order to gain attention he must literally produce a "sensation." But how?

There is a proper kind of sensationalism. Nobody will find fault with Peter and John for getting the attention of the beggar at the Gate Beautiful by saying, "Look on us!" If men cannot be made to look how shall they see? "Faith cometh by hearing." It is for the preacher to make his auditors open their eyes and prick up their ears.

The name of Dr. Talmage, of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, has been so generally associated with the reproach of sensationalism that a word from him in this connection will not be amiss. "If a man," he says, "stands in his pulpit with the dominant idea of giving entertainment—mere intellectual entertainment or the stirring of the risibilities of his congregation—he is committing blasphemy; but if he proposes to make a sensation by introducing gospel principles in preference to worldly principles and bringing men to repentance for their sins and to faith in God, then the more sensationalism he has (with such ends in view) the better. The charge of sensationalism is generally made by dried-up ministers who cannot get an audience. Go into some church

where a man preaches to seventy-five people on a clear Sunday morning, and before he gets through you will probably hear him deplore 'sensationalism in the pulpit.'"

But there is such a thing as paying too dear for one's whistle. It is both vulgar and unprofitable for a minister of the Gospel to play the buffoon or, under any circumstances, to transcribe his epic into doggerel to please a people with itching ears.

1. There is the *sensationalism of the manifesto.*

I see no objection to the publication of church notices, with sermon themes, in the secular press; but such announcements may easily be so overdone as to remind one of the "barker" at a tent-door calling attention to the prodigious attractions of the Snake-charmer and the Wild Man of Borneo. Not infrequently there are "scare-heads" in the Church Column, as well as elsewhere, in the Yellow Press. This is not only unseemly but ineffectual. People who come to church with the expectation of seeing Jupiter hurl a thunder-bolt and hear, instead, a simple shepherd piping on an oaten reed will scarcely come again. Once is enough; the minister has played them false.

2. There is, also, the *sensationalism of the theme.*

(1) A secular theme may "draw"; but our business is to make the Gospel draw. Science and philosophy, politics and current events, have no right in the pulpit except as they contribute towards our purpose as fishers of men.

(2) An heretical topic will attract a certain class of people; just as a crowd would gather anywhere to see a man strike his mother in the breast. Give it out that in your next sermon you propose to deny the inspira-

tion of the Scriptures or the virgin birth of Jesus or any other of the fundamentals and you can confidently count on a full congregation. But, apart from the moral considerations involved, it is scarcely worth while; because people are bound to weary of your most interesting antics when they discover that you are simply a dishonest man.

(3) An outlandish subject will collect a crowd; *e. g.*, "Love and Courtship," "The Snuffers of Divine Grace," or "The Nimble Sixpence"; but before resorting to this catch-penny method you would do well to reflect on the loss of self-respect and the sacrifice of general esteem which are involved in it.[1]

3. And there is the *sensationalism of treatment.*

(*a*) It cannot be affirmed that humour has no place in preaching; but it is to be handled, like an edged tool, with great care.

(*b*) An affectation of great learning may deceive the simple, but only for a while. Pedants affect profundity; simplicity is the fashion of true scholarship. The people can be trusted to distinguish between a fog and a sunrise.

(*c*) The use of florid rhetoric is equally unwise and unprofitable. The line between eloquence and grandiloquence is clear enough: yet the most eloquent are those who most frequently cross it. It is only the arm of the best batsman that strikes the ball out of bounds. The high sounding bathos in Henry Meville's sermon

[1] Dr. Burgess once preached a sermon on the Swine of Gadara, divided as follows:

1. The devil will play at small game rather than none.
2. They run fast whom the devil drives.
3. The devil bringeth his service to a pretty market.

on the Resurrection of Christ would have been impossible to a less oratorical man; listen to it: "He went down to the grave in the weakness of humanity, designing to pour forth a torrent of lustre of life. He did not bid the firmament cleave asunder and the constellations of eternity shine out in their majesties and dazzle and blind an overawed creation. He rose up a moral giant from His grave-clothes and, proving Death vanquished in his own stronghold, left the vacant sepulchre as a centre of light to the dwellers on the planet. He took not the suns and systems which crowd immensity in order to form one brilliant cataract, which rushing down in its glories might sweep away darkness from the benighted race of the Apostate; but He came forth from the tomb masterful and victorious; and the place where He had lain became the focus of the rays of the long-hidden truth; and the fragments of His gravestone were the stars from whence flashed the immortality of man."

Let us turn now from these unwarrantable methods of gaining and holding attention to some legitimate ways of doing so.

To begin with let it be considered that the subject matter of our preaching is of itself sensational to the last degree. Its truths are tremendous in their import and take hold upon the innermost fibres of the soul. Dullness in the pulpit is, therefore, intolerable. It can only be accounted for on the assumption that the preacher has not apprehended his theme. If an old reference may be pardoned, David Garrick was quite right when, being asked by a clergyman, "Why is it that you draw multitudes while I preach to empty pews?" he made the reply, "I set forth fiction as if it

were true, while you preach truth as if it were fiction." We in the ministry need to be more and more drenched with the reality of truth. Would that God might give us clear eyes to see those things which, being unseen, are most real and eternal. How we could preach, then! No need of adventitious helps. We should find no difficulty in bringing our people face to face with the great solemnities.

In our seminary course we were taught to divide truth under three heads, to wit: Theology, Anthropology, and Soteriology. These comprehend the sum and substance of the Christian system. Each of these divisions of doctrine has in it such possibilities of interest and conviction that we who preach them are without excuse if they do not force their way to the centre of our hearers' hearts.

First: *Theology*, *i. e.*, the science of God.

God! A great word. A word of three letters only, but of infinite dimensions; easy to speak but how difficult to apprehend! "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Our work is to bring Him near to the hearts and consciences of the people. It is ours to declare the Name and the meaning of it.

(1) God essential. Try to define Him. Here is the best definition that ever was formulated: "God is a Spirit (What is spirit?), infinite (What is infinite?), eternal (Eternity!), unchangeable (How can we grasp immutability?), in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." Thus the moment we attempt to simplify the mystery, lo, a new mystery is found in every word! Turn your telescope towards the farthest nebula in infinite space, and from far yonder comes the word, "Canst thou by searching find

out God?" Turn your microscope upon the last reduction of life, protoplasm or primordial germ, and out of that comes a whisper, "Canst thou by searching find out God?"

In this connection I venture to introduce, at some length, a portion of one of Joseph Parker's discourses, in which he displays the marvellous facility and power of expression which made him a master among eloquent men: "God! Unknown and unknowable; even so, yet none the less the one reality, and the one energy of the universe. What it is possible to know it must be possible to explain, to put into an equal number of words, which, being all set together, sum themselves into the exact measure of the thing that is known. What can be known can of course be contained by the faculty which knows it. The vessel is of necessity larger than its contents. If, then, any faculty of mine knows God, that faculty contains God, and is in that sense larger than God, which is impossible and absurd. Whatever I can know is, by the very fact that I can know it, less than I am; bigger, it may be, as to mere size in length and breadth, a huge disc that glares with light, or a globe flying fast, yet with speed that can be set down in so many ciphers or lines of ciphers on a child's slate, so clearly that we can say: It is so much an hour the great wings fly, and not one mile more. What is that but mere bigness, an appeal to our easily excited wonder, a Size that shakes our pride and bids us mind our ways, or a weight that may fall upon us from the sky? It is nothing but infinitized mud, nothing but an ascertainable quantity and intensity of fire—a wide and high stair leading to nothing!—Unknown—Unknowable. Thanks. I am tired of the Known and

the Knowable, tired of saying this star is fifty millions of miles in circumference, that star is ninety millions of miles farther off than the moon, and yonder planet is five million times larger than the earth. It is mere gossip in polysyllables, getting importance by hugeness, something that would never be named in inches, that owes its fame to the word *millions*. It is so that men want to make a mouthful of God! A great mouthful, no doubt, say even to the extent of supermillions squared and cubed into a whole slateful of ciphers, but pronounceable in words. Failing this, they suppose they have destroyed Him by saying He is Unknowable and Unknown. It makes me glad to think He is! That any One or any Thing should be unknowable and should yet invite and stimulate inquiry is educationally most hopeful. O soul of mine, there are grand times in store for thee! I cannot rattle my staff against the world's boundary wall, and say, The End!—Poor staff! It thrusts itself into a cloud; it goes over the edge; it is like to be pulled out of my hand by gravitation from another centre stronger than the earth's core, a gravitation that pulls even the earth itself and keeps it from reeling and falling. Yes, prying staff, thou canst touch nothing but a most ghostly emptiness. Soul of man, if thou wouldst truly see—see the Boundless, see the Possible, see God—go into the dark when and where the darkness is thickest. That is the mighty and solemn sanctuary of vision. The light is vulgar in some uses. It shows the mean and vexing detail of space and life with too gross palpableness, and frets the sensitiveness of the eyes. I must find the healing darkness that has never been measured off into millions and paraded as a nameable quantity of surprise and mystery.

Deus absconditus! God hideth Himself, oftenest in the light. He touches the soul in the gloom and vastness of night, and the soul, being true in its intent and wish, answers the touch without a shudder or a blush. It is even so that God comes to me. He does not come through a man's high argument, a flash of human wit, a sudden and audacious answer to an infinite enigma, or a toilsome reply to some high mental challenge. His path is through the pathless darkness—without a foot-print to show where He stepped; through the forest of the night He comes; and when He comes the brightness is all within! My God—unknown and unknowable—cannot be chained as a Prisoner of Logic, or delivered into the custody of a theological proposition, or figured into literal art. Shame be the portion of those who have given Him a setting within the points of the compass, who have robed Him in cloth of their own weaving, and surnamed Him at the bidding of their cold and narrow fancy! For myself, I know that I cannot know Him, that I have a joy wider than knowledge, a conception that domes itself above my best thinking, as the sky domes itself in infinite pomp and lustre above the earth whose beauty it creates. God! God! God! best defined when undefined; a Fire that may not be touched, a Life too great for shape or image, a Love for which there is no equal name. Who is He? God. What is He? God. Of whom begotten? God. He is at once the question and the answer, the self-balance, the All."

(2) God personal. It is ours to bring God near. Sir John Franklin relates that when trying to persuade a tribe of Esquimaux of the divine presence and interest, the chief answered him, "There may be a God, but

He surely knows nothing about us. Behold our poverty, our rude homes, our tattered garments! Behold yon icy crags! There may be such a Being as you mention; but, if so, He is surely afar off." It devolves upon us to let the people know that God is a real personality, with eyes to see, a heart to pity and mighty arms to help.

(3) God paternal. It was observed by Madame de Gasparin that if Jesus had done nothing in His earthly ministry but to teach men to say, "Our Father which art in heaven," that would have been abundant compensation for the vast outlay involved in His coming to dwell among men.

Thus to declare the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable One is surely a work that should enlist our utmost enthusiasm and insure us against the least possibility of dullness. Our call comes like the Voice that spoke to Moses in the wilderness. While following Jethro's flocks amid the solitudes he saw an acacia-bush on fire. He drew nigh. The flames enveloped the bush, yet not a twig was burned! As he wondered a voice said, "Draw not hither; put off thy shoes; the place is holy ground." He reverently bowed his head; it had come at last! He was afraid to utter a word. "I am the God of thy fathers," said the Voice; "I am come down to deliver thy people. Behold I will send thee." —"Who am I that I should go?"—"I will be with thee."—"What is thy name?"—"Go say unto them, Jehovah hath sent thee." He went. He gathered the elders and people together and, with signs and wonders, showed them that Jehovah is God. He made his way to the Egyptian court and presented his demand: "Thus saith Jehovah; let My people go!" Pharaoh

replied with a derisive smile, "I know Isis; I know Osiris; I know all the gods of Egypt; but who, pray, is this Jehovah?" Moses said, "I will declare Him unto thee. Thou believest in the Nile-god, in holy Scarabæus, in the Frog-headed One, in Apis, in the divine Leek, in all forms of adorable life; but Jehovah will prove Himself the master of thy gods." He waved his rod, and the Nile became a rolling torrent of blood. He waved it again, and frogs came up from the waterside into the ovens, and kneading-troughs and bedchambers. Again, and the air was full of gnats and beetles. Oh, they should have enough of holy Scarabæus! Again, and a murrain fell upon the cattle; behold Apis was put to shame! Again, and destruction was rained on wheat fields and leek gardens. Yet once more, and the homes of Egypt sent forth a wail for the first-born. Thus "I-Am-That-I-Am" proved Himself the God of gods!

This is our commission; to let the people know that Jehovah reigns and will have His way among the children of men.

Second: *Anthropology*, that is, the science of man.

We do not know ourselves. It is a true saying, "The proper study of mankind is man." It devolves upon us to make the people see themselves not "as ithers see them," but as they are, and as they appear in the clear sight of God. In so doing we shall find ourselves at no loss for material to enchain their attention. There is no room for dullness here.

(1) We are to throw upon the canvas the picture of man as God created him. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life so that he became a living soul. He made him a little lower than the angels. Here he

is, under the trees of Paradise, his heart full of happiness, his conscience clear as the sunlight. He walks with God in the cool of the day. He has kingly dominion over all creatures. What a splendid heritage is his! What a glorious outlook is before him!

> "O mighty brother soul of man,
> Where'er thou art, or low or high,
> Thy skyey arches with exultant span
> O'er roof infinity!"

(2) We are to throw upon the canvas another picture,—of man exiled from Paradise, sent out into a wilderness of toil and sorrow, his head fallen on his breast, his heart full of shame, his conscience smitten with remorse, tottering on towards the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He is lost and ruined; on his brow is written Ichabod, "The glory is departed!"

(3) We are to throw upon the canvas another picture—a spectre black as midnight—Sin.

It was sin that wrought the calamity. Sin has dug every grave. Sin has unsheathed every sword. Sin has desolated homes, corrupted social life and ruined governments. Sin bloats the face of youth and scars its beauty with foul traces of sensuality. Sin dethrones the proudest intellects and sets maddened souls on fire of hell. Sin sharpened the dagger that pierced the heart of the only begotten Son of God.

It is easy to preach smooth things. The multitudes demand them (Isa. xxx. 10), but these are not for us. Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show the people their sin! Sin, and death following after! Not sin in the abstract, not sin floating in the air like the breath of a pestilence or exhaling like

miasma from the slums, but sin abiding in human hearts and making itself manifest in human lives—sin in you and me.

So came the call to Nathan, "Go, show David his sin." The king had murdered Uriah and taken Bathsheba to wife. He had kept his crime in his own breast, but his soul was troubled. Over the blue skies, where once he loved to read the legend of the divine glory, was written, "Murder!" The winds that whistled round his palace shrieked, "Adultery!" In the watches of the night he saw in letters of fire on the dark walls of his chamber, "Uriah!" When he knelt in prayer, voices called to him from the corners of his closet, "Bathsheba!" In the temple the hosannas and hallelujahs of the great choirs had an undertone like a wail of sorrow that ever reminded him of his sin. The court-preacher—a sensationalist—entered. After a respectful salutation he laid before the king a case for judgment, a trifling case yet worthy of the royal attention. "A poor man had one little ewe lamb. It was dear as a daughter, ate of his food and drank of his cup. His rich neighbour had many flocks and herds; but when his hospitality was overtaxed, he spared to take of his own possessions and seized upon the ewe lamb." Thus far, when the king interrupted him, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die!" The moment has come. A sermon is a thrust. Draw thy blade, O prophet of the Lord! "Thou art the man!" The iron enters into David's soul; he sees himself stripped of purple and ermine, a sinner before God. Up the winding stairway he staggers to his closet on the house-top, the face of Uriah staring into his—a cold, resolute, blood-stained

face. He bends in his closet and, from every nook and cranny, the filmed eyes of Uriah are gazing at him. He kneels—listen now at his door: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions! For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight."—This is the tremendous fact which we are to declare to our people: we are all alike and there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In our brain, our conscience, our heart, is the plague-spot. To preach this as it ought to be preached is of necessity to touch men at the very core of their being. If we did but apprehend the truth in its reality we should preach with such effect as was seen when Jonathan Edwards spoke of "sinners in the hands of an angry God"; when men and women cried out in their anguish and clung for support to the pillars of the church. Oh, no, we have no need of adventitious helps to win attention. There is no room for dullness here, if only we have ourselves realized the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

A scene in Whitefield's church in London is described by Paxton Hood. In the congregation are many notables, including Hume, Walpole, Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Garrick, Goldsmith, the Duchess of Marlborough, the Countess of Huntingdon, Cowper, Toplady and Lord Chesterfield. "The whole audience is hushed, is breathless; of what is he talking? The madness, the folly, the blind depravity of the sinner. That then is the subject. And he is describing the wanderings of a poor blind beggar—not a very attract-

ive subject for the Humes and Walpoles and Chesterfields in his audience,—a poor blind beggar, led by a dog, the image of the merely natural reason without the light of revelation; a poor blind beggar, wandering in a dark, wild night through cold and rain and tempest. The wanderer wends his way till at last he reaches the edge of a fearful cliff and precipice; he does not know the dread and danger beneath; he does not know that death is there, in that abyss! His dog is not faithless, but he has lost his way; he does not know, the night is very dark, and the dog has taken the fatal step; he is over the cliff, but still the poor blind man holds on; another step, another step—'*Good heavens! He's gone! Save him, Whitefield!*' From whence did that come?—those words that thrilled and rang through the chapel, and broke the peroration of the description. Whence? From a rustic; and all those scholars and peers smile contemptuously? Not so; from Chesterfield's pew; from Chesterfield himself;—that cold and heartless follower of fashion, whose motto for all society was *nil admirari*, whose prime article of creed it was to school and discipline the passions and the feelings so that they should never be observed; he it was; he was quite oblivious; he knew not where he was, but carried away and carried along by the pathos of the speaker he too was in the dark and lonely night, near that blind beggar on the cliff."

Third: *Soteriology, i. e.*, the science of salvation. This is the third link in the gospel chain of reconciliation with God. The substance of the Gospel is perfectly comprehended in three tremendous truths:

(1) The Incarnation. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in flesh! We are to stand at the

threshold of the stable in Bethlehem and bring to the knowledge of our people this adumbration of Deity. Here are heard the songs of angels, the laughter of children, the joy of those who have been groping for the infinite and found it. Behold, all the sons of God are shouting for joy! Who does not covet the privilege of standing thus to usher sorrowing, bewildered souls into the presence of the enfleshed God?

(2) The Atonement. All souls are asking, "What shall we do to be saved?" All are desiring to know how man may be reconciled with God. We preach the redemptive glory of the Cross. We cry, "Look and live!"

The fashion of criticizing Dr. Talmage for his sensational methods has been referred to; but there is this to be said: he consistently and persistently preached Christ as the Saviour of men. And this, more than all his eccentricities, more than anything else, was why the people thronged to hear him. "Come on, young ministers," he said; "take this pulpit, take all the pulpits, and in the language of the street and the market-place preach Christ!" and again: "When this famine-struck world realizes that the Church is a government-station, set up by the government of the universe to provide the bread of eternal life for all the people, the rush will be unprecedented and unimaginable." And again: "One-half the things a man is expected to believe in order to enter the Church and reach heaven have no more to do with his salvation than the question, How many volcanoes are there in the moon? or, How far apart from each other are the rings of Saturn? or, How many teeth were there in the jaw-bone with which Samson smote the Philistines? I believe ten thousand things, but

none of them has anything to do with my salvation except these two: I am a sinner and Christ came to save me."

A poor demented creature, a fisherman's wife, once came to the parish minister with her hands full of wet sand, saying, "Do you see it? Oh, my sins! They are as the sands of the seashore for multitude; as the sands of the seashore!" "Where did you get it?" asked he. "Down by the beacon." "Go down by the beacon and put it there. Dig deep and pile it up as high as you can. Wait there until the tide rolls in." She went down by the beacon, heaped up the sand and stood waiting. She watched the waves as they crept higher and higher until they swept over and swept away her sins! Thus to a simple soul was the truth made clear. Men of the pulpit, the crimson tide rolls in! Beneath the cross we preach the Gospel of redeeming Love. The tide rolls in! "It cleanseth me; it cleanseth me; oh, praise the Lord, it cleanseth me!"

(3) The Resurrection. "Life and immortality are brought to light." The darkest night the world ever knew was when Jesus lay in His sepulchre. The Sun of Righteousness was eclipsed. But the brightest dawn was when He broke the bands of death, ascended up on high and took captivity captive. Here at the open sepulchre we stand pointing to the open heavens, whither He has gone. Lo, yonder the keys of death and hell are at His girdle. By the miracle of the resurrection the seal of divine indorsement is put upon His mediatorial work. Here is comfort for those who mourn. Here is courage for all who tremble at the approach of the King of Terrors. Here is the triumph of heavenly grace. Why need I fear?

"The world recedes, it disappears;
Heaven opens on mine eyes! Mine ears
With sounds seraphic ring.
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
O grave, where is thy victory?
O death, where is thy sting?"

In a sermon on the Resurrection by Dr. Talmage he painted a procession coming forth from the graveyard at the call of Jesus: "Good-morning! You have slept enough!" and proceeding on their way to heaven, past banks of clouds and floating worlds. "Farewell, dissolving earth! But, on the other side, as we rise, heaven at first appears no larger than your hand. And nearer it looks like a chariot, and nearer it looks like a throne, and nearer it looks like a star, and nearer it looks like a sun, and nearer it looks like a universe. Hail, sceptres that shall always wave! Hail, anthems that shall always roll! Hail, companionship never again to part!" His sermons abound in this kind of imagery; and it is difficult to believe that even those who criticize do not covet the ability to equal it.

What splendid opportunities we have in these stupendous themes for enchaining the attention and capturing the hearts of men! We stand like the sentinel above the gate of Orleans. The walls have been breached and the people are reduced to the last extremity. A cry is heard from above the gate, "I see the rescue of the Lord!" There is nothing in sight but a cloud, far yonder on the hills. Nearer it comes. "I see the glistening of spears!" "I see the waving of the Gothic banners!" It was indeed the squadron of Theodoric; and the people were saved. Oh, men of the ministry, it is for us to stand thus upon the outer ram-

parts of death, announcing the interposition of the God of Salvation. The banners are waving, the shields of heaven are aglow with morning light, heaven itself is opened, hosannas and hallelujahs are ringing all around us.

These are the truths we are commissioned to preach. Oh, for the touch of the live heavenly coal upon our lips to enable us to preach them aright! Let us pray that the vision of the burning bush may be vouchsafed to us. Let us pray for the power of the Holy Ghost to prepare the way of the Truth by unbolting hearts to receive it. For if this everlasting Gospel is true at all it is awfully, eternally, divinely true. So may God help us to receive it, and so to preach it.

Suggestions

In order to make his message rightly "sensational," *i. e.*, so as to produce in the hearer a definite impression and a corresponding response, the preacher must comply with certain prerequisite conditions.

First, He must be sincere and must satisfy his hearers that he is so.

His power of persuasion is measured by their conviction that he believes what he says. I have heard men deliver themselves of their message with such an air of indifference as to convey the impression that, to their minds, truth has the advantage of error only as tweedledum differs from tweedledee.

Second, He must be in earnest.

Earnestness is sincerity in action. A hundred chariots may pass and nobody will care; but when Jehu comes "driving furiously" everybody knows there is business in hand. It is related as a matter of

fact that at Gettysburg a slender gunner, in defending his battery, hurled a stone which three men could not lift the next day. The heat of battle must be reckoned with in estimating the forensic factors that make for conviction. Icicles light no fires.

In one of Dr. John Brown's letters he speaks of hearing Dr. Chalmers in a country church in the Highlands and describes his preaching in this way: "As we entered the kirk we saw a notorious character, a drover with a brutal look,

> 'There was a hardness in his cheek,
> A hardness in his eye.'

He was the terror of the countryside. We not only wondered at but were afraid of him when we saw him going in. The minister entered, homely in his dress and gait, but having a great look upon him, like a mountain among the hills. When he began to preach the tide set in. Everything aided in his power; deep called unto deep. How astonished and impressed we all were! He was at the full thunder of his power: the whole man was in an agony of earnestness. The drover was weeping like a child; tears were running down his ruddy cheeks; his face smoothed out like an infant's; his whole body stirred in emotion. And when the wonderful speaker sat down, how beautiful to our eyes did the thunder look. We went home quieter than we came. We thought of other things, that voice, that face, those great simple living thoughts, that flow of resistless eloquence, that piercing, shattering voice."

Third, He must address himself directly to the point.

Directness is the word. Men are too busy nowadays to lend an ear to inane generalizations. They go to

church to hear the preacher tell them what, in his opinion, they individually ought to believe and be and do. The practical application of the sermon must not wait for the peroration but must run all through it.

Fourth, He must be logical.

The people want to know what they must do to inherit eternal life: it is for him to show them The Only Way: but he must prove that it is the only way or they will not believe it. He must follow the divine method: "Come now, saith the Lord, and let us reason together." His thesis must have no flaw in it. He cannot satisfy thirsty souls with a gourd that holds no water. It is the grip of argument that, under the power of the Spirit, captures men as prisoners of hope.

Fifth, He must preach hopefully.

A pessimist is out of place in the pulpit. The rainbow about the throne should be reflected even in Jeremiah's tears. Be of good courage, for "God works in all things: all obey His first propulsion from the night." Wherefore let us not preach "as dying men to dying men," but as living men to men who live forever. Let us put to shame the poet who wrote of us,

> "They wear long faces, just as if their Maker,
> The Lord of glory, were an undertaker."

Why should not we be the cheerfullest of men? Has not God blotted out our sins and opened the gates of heaven for us? Has He not called us to the ministry of reconciliation and given us a message of peace? Wherefore it behooves us not only to be, but to give the world to understand that we are, the hopeful, happy children of God.

Sixth, The preacher who would suitably impress his hearers must give himself with utter abandon to the business in hand. Self-consciousness is our arch-enemy. Let the truth make us free; free to serve the truth with all our might. We can afford to forget ourselves when engaged in our Master's work. Aristotle said, "He is the freeman who belongs to himself and not to another"; but we are free because we are bought with a price and constrained by love towards Him whose we are and whom we serve. Wherefore when we stand up to deliver His message to souls for whom He died we should be able to lose sight of ourselves in a passionate desire to do our best for Him and them. So comes the abandon of implicit faith and love. We are handicapped no more. Doubt and self-mistrust, defects of mind and presence, mnemonic helps and props of every sort, fear of the face of man, all these to the winds! We have a message; and the love of Christ constraineth us![1]

[1] How may one who earnestly desires to be fresh and original safeguard himself against sensationalism? The answer is in three parts: 1. Let him cultivate good taste. 2. Let him be thoroughly Scriptural in his preaching; and let it be the whole design of his preaching to set forth the message of the Word of God. 3. Let him earnestly desire to save and help others. Let it be his earnest prayer, "Lord help me to preach the saving word to those to whom I minister, and thus to glorify Thy great and gracious name."—*Breed, "Preparing to Preach."*

PART SEVENTH

Pulpit Power

I

THE SECRET OF PULPIT POWER

PREACHING is persuasion towards God. The business of the preacher is to counsel, to convince and to convert; *i. e.*, to bring men into immediate vital touch with God. If this be the objective point all other considerations must yield to it. The style of discourse is of consequence only so far as it contributes to this end. The rounding of a sentence is less important than the point of it. Primarily, therefore, not beauty of diction but persuasive power is the thing to pray and strive for.[1]

1. The secret of power.

(1) It is not physical; though there is much to be said for a good physique. Thaddeus Stevens was a man of imposing stature; but Alexander H. Stephens, his contemporary, though small, wizened and pain-racked, was a stronger man. Rufus Choate, when remonstrated with for injuring his constitution, replied, "I used up my constitution long ago; for years I've

[1] When John Bunyan preached in London, he attracted greater audiences than the most learned divines of the land, because he preached with greater power. The celebrated Dr. Owen was often among his hearers; and when Charles II expressed his astonishment that a man of the doctor's learning could hear the tinker preach, Owen is said to have replied, "Had I the tinker's abilities, please your majesty, I would most gladly relinquish my learning."—*Spring*, "*Power of the Pulpit.*"

been living on my by-laws." A sound body is a fine asset for a preacher;[1] but there's many a tall building with an attic to let.

(2) Neither is it intellectual. The man who presumes on genius will find it profits him nothing unless there is a genius for plodding back of it. And the same is true of culture: a caution for college-bred men. The best superintendent of frontier missions in our country to-day is a man who doesn't know will from shall, but just understands his business and keeps "everlastingly at it."[2]

(3) Our true power is spiritual and supernatural. The third Person of the Godhead is its author and finisher. And there is no good reason why we should not all be adequately endued with it. For a great promise is given us: to wit: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to

[1] A sound body somehow inspires confidence. Strong, clear utterance wins a hearing, where a thin, discordant voice evokes ridicule. Poor health discounts the truth. The condition of the body affects the mind. Sickness fosters a jaundiced view of life. No man can appreciate or proclaim the splendid symmetry of an historic creed, whose temperature tops the normal or whose joints are full of rheumatism. A dyspeptic preacher is in danger of making the Gospel indigestible. Many a headache has found its way into the sermon. If the minister is physically depressed, he unconsciously radiates from the pulpit an influence which is not conducive to spiritual vitality.—*Nichols, "Preaching."*

[2] "Give me the line that plows its stately course
Like a proud swan, conquering the field by force;
That, like some cottage beauty, strikes the heart
Quite unindebted to the tricks of art."

—*Cowper.*

them that ask Him" (Luke xi. 13). Blessed *a fortiori!* What father would refuse to feed his hungry child? "How much more" then will God bestow His baptism of fire and power upon the preacher who really desires it!

At the burning of Farewell Hall in Chicago, back in the '60's, Mr. Moody, having lost his parish with most of his earthly possessions, set out for New York with a feeling that his life was broken in sunder. On the cars he kept praying that God would endue him with more power for a greater work. His plea was, "Make me willing, O Lord, in the day of Thy power; willing to receive all that Thou wouldst bestow upon me." In a room at the old Metropolitan Hotel he kept up that prayer, hour after hour, kneeling, walking the floor, pleading, "O Lord, make me willing to be as strong for service as Thou wouldst have me." Towards evening a friend knocked and, receiving no answer, entered. Mr. Moody was standing, with tearful eyes uplifted, and saying softly in a broken voice, "O Lord, stay now Thy hand! No more! No more!" His prayer had been answered. God had fed his hungry soul, had filled him even to the lips. And then began that marvellous work of evangelism in America and Europe—when souls came to Christ like doves flocking to their windows—which must ever be a mystery to those who doubt the importance of the energizing influence of the Spirit of God.

2. This power is attainable. The secret is out. Christ Himself disclosed it when He breathed upon His disciples, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and thus qualified them for their work.

Three things are assumed on the preacher's part:

First, his call. If there is any doubt in his mind

concerning this matter he would do well to pause until he has settled it. Otherwise his ministry will be like that of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok who ran without being sent and had nothing to say.

Second, his consecration. At the outset of Isaiah's ministry he had a vision: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain He covered His face, and with twain He covered His feet, and with twain He did fly. And one cried unto another and said, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried; and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, 'Woe is me; for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips: and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.' Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Here am I; send me.'"

It is safe to say that no minister can ever meet the demands of his high calling until he has—with all his powers of body and soul—answered the revealing of his Lord's plan and purpose in words of like significance, "Here am I: send me!"

At the beginning of Paul's ministry he also had a vision: "It came to pass that, as I made my journey and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, sud-

denly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground and heard a voice saying unto me, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' And I answered, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He said unto me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.' And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord saith unto me, 'Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.'" In speaking of this experience Paul says, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19). His unconditional surrender to Christ was followed by the enduement of power. He counted everything else but loss that he might "win Christ and be found in Him"; and he *was* found in Him, lost in Him, mighty in Him, triumphant in Him.

Third, his ambition. No preacher has a right to be satisfied with anything less than a realization of the highest possibilities that are in him. An archer's arrow pointed at the sun falls short; but even so, it was better than not to pull the string at all.

> "I wonder if ever a song was sung
> But the singer's heart sang sweeter?
> I wonder if ever a hymn was rung
> But the thought surpassed the meter?
> I wonder if ever a sculptor wrought
> Till the cold stone echoed his ardent thought?
> Or if ever a painter with light and shade
> The dream of his inmost heart portrayed?"

No man of God is ever as strong as he ought to be; but every one is as strong as he is willing to be. The Lord, whose resources are infinite, stands ready to charge us with power if we will have it so. But oh, these reluctant souls of ours! We go mourning all

the day over our leanness when a table of fat things and wine on the lees is spread before us. God wants us to be strong; do we care for it? He has made abundant provision of strength; are we ambitious to have and utilize it? Can we say Amen to the words of William Carey: "Let us undertake great things for God and expect great things from Him"?

3. How shall we appropriate this power which God stands ready to bestow upon us?

Three things are prerequisite:

(1) We must have convictions; definite convictions as to the great verities of the Christian faith. Ifs and perhapses are poor diet for our training table. The man who believes is the man who adventures. Our doubts make cowards of us all. Find a man who speaks in terms of certainty, such as "I know" and "I am persuaded," and you will see him crossing plains and climbing mountains to advance the banners of his faith.

The preacher, above all men, must be able to say Yea and Amen.

> "'Tis not enough that what you say is true;
> To make us feel it, you must feel it too;
> Show yourself warm, and that will warmth impart
> To every hearer's sympathizing heart."

He must believe in God the Father: not merely in law or energy or "a something not ourselves that maketh for righteousness" or in any other diaphanous ghost of a god.[1]

[1] "An immense solitary Spectre waits!
It hath no shape, it hath no sound,
It hath no place, it hath no time;
It is, and was, and will be;

He must believe in God the Son; not as a "good rabbi," not as a transcendental dreamer tagged with a divine "value judgment," not as the best of men; but as precisely what He claimed to be; namely, the only begotten Son of God who came into the world, out of the glory which He shared with the Father before the world was, to die for sinners that, by faith in Him as the only Saviour, they might have eternal life.

He must believe in God the Holy Ghost; not as an impersonal affluence or effluence or influence, or as anything that can be designated by the neuter pronoun "it," but as the personal Author of life and energy and light in spiritual experience. If other men, other Christians, need the kindly offices of the Holy Spirit, the preacher more; because all the factors that contribute to success in his appointed work are immediately from him.[1]

And he must believe in all the fundamental verities

> It is never more nor less, nor glad nor sad;
> Its name is Nothingness.
> Power walketh high, and Misery doth crawl,
> And the clepsydron drips,
> And the sands fall down in the hour-glass;
> Men live and strive, regret, forget,
> And love and hate, and know it.
> The Spectre saith, 'I wait!'
> And at the last it beckons, and they pass;
> And still the red sands fall within the glass,
> And still the water-clock doth drip and weep;
> And that is all!"

[1] Consider that in no unmeaning sense every true sermon is a product of inspiration, the Holy Ghost working in and through the natural powers and producing a result to which even the finest human abilities would by themselves be incompetent.—*Morris*, "*The Greatness and Joy of Preaching.*"

which centre in the One God who manifests Himself in these three Personalities, as they have been authoritatively revealed in the Word of God.

(2) The preacher who cares for power must have a clear conception of his work as a fisher of men. In other words he must have a covetous passion or, as the Quakers would say, a "concern," for souls. Our Lord said that He came into the world to seek and to save the lost; and He said also, "As the Father hath sent Me into the world so send I you." This, then, is our primary errand and our commission, to capture men for Christ as prisoners of hope. To that end it is obviously necessary that we should be profoundly convinced of two facts; that they are lost without Christ and saved by faith in Him. Then comes the "passion" which expresses itself in terms of intercession as earnest as the prayer of Knox, "O God, give me Scotland or I die!"[1]

(3) The preacher who is ambitious for spiritual power must have faith. He must have faith (*a*) in the saving virtue of the blood that cleanseth from sin, (*b*)

[1] As the passion of gold absorbs some men, and the passion for power absorbs others, so, if a man is called of God to proclaim the unsearchable riches of the Gospel, all lesser ambitions will be swallowed up in his longing to lead men to Christ. Pitying their destination, distressed by their peril, realizing the pricelessness of souls for whom the Son of God thought it worth while to die, he puts all personal considerations aside, that he may devote himself to the salvation of the lost. Like Paul, he feels that necessity is laid upon him, and exclaims, "Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" Then will his sermons, shot through with the love of God, tinctured with the blood of the Cross, be evangelistic in the true sense; and, driven forward by the power of the Holy Ghost, they will find a lodgment in the hearts of men.—*Nichols, "Preaching."*

in the trustworthiness of the divine Scriptures which vouch for it, and (*c*) in the surety of our covenant, "He that goeth forth with weeping, bearing precious seed, shall *doubtless* come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

So much, in general terms, as to the secret of power in preaching; now as to the power in a particular sermon. It depends upon five things:

First, a definite purpose. A sermon with no objective point in view is not likely to arrive. Direction is the thing. The postman who, in making his collection in holiday week, found a letter inscribed "To mother: in care of God," first smiled and then looked serious enough for tears. Perhaps, after all, that letter reached its destination *via* the Dead Letter Office: but there are many well meant and well written sermons on Nothing in Particular addressed to Nobody in No-man's Land. The preacher thus goes joy-riding with his hearers; and the sum total of benefit is the transient pleasure by the way.

Second, the plan of the sermon must be adjusted to its purpose. A lawyer, retained to argue a case, proceeds to formulate his brief accordingly. The sermon is nothing in itself; only a means to an end. Power is worth while only for the sake of its product. An engineer is expected to keep his locomotive in good order so that it may make a good run. The preacher who sets out for the Mount of God and arrives at Mount Parnassus may be complimented on having made a beautiful sermon but he has certainly not made a good run.

Third, industry is needed to bring purpose and plan to a successful issue. Preaching is not an easy business.

An ounce of work is worth a ton of genius in this matter, as elsewhere in this practical world of ours. Think; read; write; then keep on thinking till your sermon is done. "By hammer and hand all arts do stand."

Fourth, the vital contact must be made. The preacher must be *en rapport* with his people; else his strongest argument will be as water poured upon the ground which cannot be gathered up again. A ninety ton engine is no more efficient than a wheelbarrow unless it be coupled with the train. Wherefore get your grip on your congregation. You will not accomplish this by putting on ministerial airs. If you are speaking of sinners say "we" not "you." Get on common ground with the people. If you want their sympathy present your positive pole. Show them that you are seeking not theirs but them. They will not believe you unless they believe in you.

Fifth, and most important of all, the preacher must be in vital touch with God. "Come, Holy Spirit, come!" The man in the pulpit is a mere mannikin, worked by interior clockwork, unless animated and invigorated by the breath of God. His sermon may be beautiful; but what of it? I have heard beautiful sermons that were iridescent and—so far as I was concerned—transient as bubbles blown into the air; and I have heard poor sermons by poor preachers in poor churches that gripped me the day they were preached and have ever since stayed by me.

II

CHRIST OUR MODEL

WE are much given to urging upon our people the importance of imitating Christ; yet none too much so. For Christ is the Ideal Man. He was, to quote from the Nonesuch Professor, "the only man who ever brought the bottom of his life up to the top of his light." Wherefore the height of our ambition is to be like Him.

The best preacher that ever preached in this world of ours was Jesus Christ, of whom it was said, "Never man spake like this Man." No doubt the secret of His power was fundamentally in His divineness; and there, of course, we cannot hope to approach Him. There were, however, some characteristics of His preaching which admit of imitation; and the more closely we follow after Him in these particulars the greater will be our success as fishers of men.

(A) *To begin with, observe His choice of themes.*

1. Doctrinal. His sermons were largely doctrinal. The man who says

> "For forms of faith let canting bigots fight;
> His faith cannot be wrong whose life is right,"

takes clear issue with Christ; for insistent as He was on morality, He never minimized the importance of truth.

(1) As to God. It is true He did not originate the thought of the divine Fatherhood, which was familiar

even to the adherents of some of the false religions; but He illuminated and deeply emphasized it. He did not say, "God is love," and drop the matter there; He gave place to justice also in His rounding out of the divine character. He did not present a flaccid, sentimental God whom sinners could defy with impunity but, in the truest sense of the word, a respectable God; *i. e.*, a God whom men can respect for the attributes which they respect most in their fellow men.

(2) As to man. He treated man as a child of God; made after the divine likeness; endowed with reason, conscience and a sovereign will; and, as Kepler said, "able to think God's thoughts after Him." But this man whom Christ presented in His preaching is always set forth as a sinner; fallen from his high estate; lost, but not hopelessly lost; a ruin, but a splendid ruin capable of restoration by the grace of God.

(3) As to the reconciliation of God and man by the atonement of the Cross. Those who speak slightingly of the Blood would do well to consider how Christ regarded it. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. This fact is the vital centre of His Gospel. He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," and "this He said signifying what death He should die." It had been prophesied that He should be "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that by His stripes we might be healed"; and, being thus written, this it must be (Luke xxiv. 25–27).

(4) As to justification by faith: the doctrine which Luther called *articulum ecclesiæ stantis aut cadentis.* He came to accomplish a full and free salvation. He tasted death for every man. The redemption thus

provided is "without money and without price"; but there is a condition affixed to it, namely, faith; which is like a hand reached out to receive it. Why not? Surely the good God who proffers the gift has a right to make such terms as please Him. And what terms could be more reasonable or magnanimous? The air is free; but a man must breathe it. Water is free; but one might stand knee-deep in the Amazon and perish of thirst if he refused to dip up the water and drink it. The key-note of the Gospel is "Only believe," *i. e.*, accept it. "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not, . . . the wrath of God abideth on him."

This saving faith was, in the preaching of Christ, set over against three things: (*a*) Indifferentism. The sinner who does nothing will perish in his sins. If the prodigal is ever to exchange the far country for his father's house he must say, "I will arise and go." (*b*) Moralism. The only "good work" which Christ ever recognized as having power to save is faith in Himself. "Then said they unto Him, 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said unto them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'" (*c*) Ceremonialism. The fiercest denunciations ever uttered by Christ were directed against the Pharisees, the best church-members of their time and most scrupulous observers of the ceremonial law. "Woe unto you, mask-wearers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell!"

2. So much for the doctrines He preached: now with reference to His ethical themes.

Doctrine and ethics go together. Truth begets conduct; for "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

The world has two ethical symbols which are universally regarded as perfect; to wit: the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount. There is a disposition in some quarters to regard the Sermon on the Mount as a sufficient basis of belief for the Christian Church; this, however, betrays a total misunderstanding of its purpose. As the Decalogue was given on the occasion of the organization of the Jewish Commonwealth, to serve as a sort of "Constitution," supplemented by the "By-laws" of the Levitical System, so the Sermon on the Mount was delivered at the beginning of Christ's ministry, to answer a like purpose in the kingdom which He was about to set up. For this reason it was distinctly ethical: and certainly not intended to displace any of the great doctrinal principles set forth elsewhere in His teachings.

His ethical teaching was co-extensive with all the relations of life. It is not enough that the true religion should set forth a single truth, however important, or even a considerable group of important truths; it must present such a comprehensive system of truth as will meet all the exigencies of human experience. It must express itself in the terms of Pascal's Law of Hydraulics; namely, "Any pressure exerted on the mass is transmitted equably in all directions." The true religion must be an educating force in the entire encyclopædia of morals. We have reason to expect, therefore, of the Gospel, that it will apply to the duties and responsibilities of life every way.

(1) Domestic life. Jesus was Himself a homeless man; yet He had much to say of the sanctities of home-life.

He set His seal upon wedlock as a divine ordinance;

saying, "What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder" (Matt. xix. 6). He gave it precedence of all other human relations, saying, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife" (Matt. xix. 5).

He left no uncertainty as to His views of filial duty: emphasizing the rights of parents on one hand (*e. g.*, Mark vii. 9–13) and the rights of children on the other (Matt. xviii. 5–10, Mark x. 14–16).

He was equally clear as to domestic piety (*e. g.*, Matt. vi. 6) and the close connection of the home with the sanctuary; ever honouring the appointments of the Church of God.

(2) Social life. Jesus was a social reformer, in the truest sense.

He laid the foundation of human equality in the Fatherhood of God; whose corollary is the brotherhood of man. In tracing the influence of those significant words "Our Father" along the pathway of history, we shall presently come to Mars Hill, where the Apostle Paul is saying, "God . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." If we follow on we shall reach the meadow at Runnymede, where the barons are extorting from John Lackland a distinct but inadequate recognition of their rights in the body politic. If we follow still further we shall come to the Reformation, with its manifesto of religious rights. If further still, we shall hear Independence Bell ringing out the proclamation, "All men are created free and equal and with certain inalienable rights!" And if we gaze onward with prophetic eyes we shall see the dawning of the Golden Age, "when man to man the world o'er shall brothers be."

Christ dignified labour; not merely by Himself belonging to the Third Estate, nor merely by His sympathetic attitude towards the "weary and heavy laden," but preëminently by His advocacy of the just claims of the toiling class. His proposition, "The labourer is worthy of his hire," struck the key-note of the wage-system for all succeeding ages. The workmen of His time lived, for the most part, on charity, or a dole sufficient for the sustenance of life: but wherever His teaching prevails to-day labour is regarded with honour and the labourer is a self-respecting man.

Christ made it possible for the man at the bottom to rise to the top. We have much to say about "the survival of the fittest," but He put the emphasis on the survival of the unfittest. The demand of godless socialism in our time is for a levelling down: "Down with wealth! Down with the aristocracy! Down with noble birth and breeding!" But the preaching of Jesus calls for a levelling up. He lends a hand to drabs and drunkards; He insists on a fighting chance for the worst of men.

Christ taught social economics from the standpoint of unselfishness. The fundamental fact in the philosophy of Adam Smith is thus stated: "A prudent self-interest is the sufficient basis of economic science." In the teaching of Jesus the exact opposite is set forth; to wit: a just consideration of the rights of others is the beginning and end of true socialism. The divine norm or fundamental fact is by Him expressed in the Golden Rule: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

(3) Civil life. The political philosophy of Christ is briefly summed up in His saying, "Render therefore

unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's " (Matt. xxii. 21). It was on Wednesday of Passion Week that He uttered these words. He was teaching in the Temple Court; His enemies were eager to ensnare Him. A dangerous question was propounded: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar?" Here was a dilemma. To say, "No" would expose Him to the charge of constructive treason; to answer "Yes" would antagonize the Jewish Nationalists. He called for a penny and asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They replied, "Cæsar's." Then, said He, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The question which immediately arises, What are the things that are Cæsar's? is satisfactorily answered.

(*a*) A just recognition of Cæsar. Government is a fact to be reckoned with. The Gospel is at odds with anarchy. Christians are not at liberty either to antagonize government or to hold themselves aloof from it.

(*b*) The support of government. The tribute money must be paid, because it stands for an honest *quid pro quo.* It represents walls and bulwarks, roads, viaducts, public improvements, schools, legislatures, protection in the enjoyment of rights and privileges. In other words the "penny" is due from every good citizen "for value received." When Peter was asked, "Does your Master pay the capitation tax?" he answered, "Yes" (Matt. xvii. 24–27).

(*c*) Subjection to the powers that be. Here is where the difficulty arises: for there is a point where the civil law may clash with conscience. It is easier then to violate conscience than it is to disobey the lower law and take the consequences. Christ was en-

joined, once and again, to desist from preaching. This He declined to do; but He offered no resistance when the penalty was laid upon Him.

(4) As to cosmopolitan life. In the fifth century there lived in Athens a philosopher named Hierocles, who was called a Neo-Platonist because he undertook the futile task of combining the Platonic system with the religion of Christ. The gist of his teaching was contained in a series of concentric circles, outlining the Law of Influence as he conceived it. At the centre was Self. The innermost circle included the duties of Domestic Life; the next, of Society; the next, of the Commonwealth; and the outermost, of Humanity. It was thus set forth that a man's influence is inversely as the distance from the centre. If this were true our responsibility would be at its maximum in the service of Ego; diminishing with the increase of the benevolent radius and reaching zero at the antipodes.

But this is not the teaching of Christ. His religion is the one catholic religion. He who preaches it must of necessity be a cosmopolite, inasmuch as he acknowledges an obligation to the last man on the remotest verge of the outermost circle. The purpose of Christ is the conquest of the world. To this end He presents a Gospel which is adapted to all. How universal its truths! How far-sweeping its ethics! We never shall be full-grown Christians until we apprehend the length and breadth and depth and height of it. O God, enlarge our hearts; save us from mean and narrow views of the Gospel of Thy beloved Son!

In the teaching of Jesus we observe a clear development of this ecumenical idea. It was not an easy matter to persuade His disciples, who were narrow-minded

Jews, to cast aside their ethnic prejudices and live as debtors to all sorts and conditions of men.

The sum total of the teaching of Christ, in this particular, was expressed in the three words, "Man," "Brother" and "Neighbour"; to each of which He gave a new definition.

(*a*) He spoke of man as a child of God; and His broad application of this term may be inferred from His words: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). He taught the universal kinship of the children of men. The word "kinship" is used advisedly in this connection; and there is a whole treatise on sociology in it. The words "kin" and "kind" are cognate; so that kinship inevitably suggests the correlated duty of kinnedness or kindness. Thus Jesus says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. v. 43–44).

(*b*) He gave a new meaning, also, to the word brother. It had been used before His advent but not as He used it.

As the filial spirit, which enables us to approach God, is not derived from our natural relation to Him but through the Spirit of adoption which Jesus gives us, so the true feeling of fraternity comes not from our natural kinship but from our relation with Jesus as the only begotten Son of God.

He called out of the world (*ek-klesia*) a company of

believers who were thenceforth to be known as "the household of faith." These are children of God by the Spirit of adoption; and Christ is among them as Elder Brother, the first-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29). He assigned to them a peculiar kinship or "filiation" which is accorded to no others; as it is written, "Looking round on them that sat round about Him, He saith, Behold My mother and My brethren" (Mark iii. 32–35).

To the members of this household He gave a new commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 34–35). This is called a "new commandment" not because mutual love had not been inculcated before, but because within this charmed circle it was placed upon a new basis of motive and measurement, namely, "that ye love one another as I have loved you." The precept had previously gone no further than, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; but self is now wholly eliminated: and the standard of measurement is not a man's love for himself but Christ's love for him.

(*c*) We now come to the teaching of Jesus as to the relation which His followers sustain to those outside of the household of faith. This is indicated in the term "neighbour." The word was already familiar, but not in its broad Christian sense. It meant *nachbar;* that is, one living near by. Our Lord used it in this restricted sense when He said, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, . . . call not thy rich neighbours; . . . but bid the poor, the maimed, the

lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed" (Luke xiv. 12–14). But in the Parable of the Good Samaritan He gave the term a broader sweep. In answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" He pointed to those who had seen the sufferer on the Bloody Way and asked, "Which of these three thinkest thou proved neighbour unto him that fell among the robbers?" The reply was, "He that showed mercy on him." Then said Jesus, "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke x. 25–37). In other words, a man is bound to be neighbour to every other man. The duties of humanity are not determined by any question of vicinage; only by the question of need. I am bound to be neighbour not only to the man who lives next door but to those who live at the other side of the globe, to the dwellers on the outermost limit of the circles of influence. My neighbour is any man, anywhere in this wide world of ours.

As preachers, desiring above all things to follow our Master and Model, we must needs extend our influence as far as possible. God's grace in our hearts should be like a pebble dropped into the ocean, which sets in motion circles of influence, ever widening until they have touched the shores of every continent and island of the sea. How far shall I make my power felt? "Far as the curse is found!" Far as the vast dominion of grace! Far as the shadow of the cross! Far as the reach of the everlasting arms in the saying that is written, "God so loved the world!" The word "*amplius*," which Michael Angelo called "the Key of Noble Art," is the word for Christian service. Our thoughts are too small, our purposes too selfish. We have not yet caught the magnificent sweep of the Gospel. Up with the imperial standards of Christ!

We follow Him to the conquest of the world! Never was leader like ours; who hath upon His vesture and thigh a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." And His grace is the universal lodestone; as He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

(B) We have occupied ourselves thus far with the subject-matter of the discourses of Christ; it remains to consider *His homiletic method.*

1. And to begin with, His simplicity. He addressed Himself to the sublimest and profoundest problems which fall within the purview of mortal men: yet His hearers never had reason to complain that His sermons were "too deep" or that He was "preaching over their heads." This was one reason why "the common people heard Him gladly." It was marvellous how He brought His great thoughts within the intellectual reach of average men. This, however, was in line with the purpose of His Gospel which was intended for all.

It would help us greatly in the preparation of our sermons if we were to have continually before us the picture of Jesus with a child on His knee, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you: except ye become as this little child ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God." A famous teacher of homiletics was wont to advise his pupils to put some of their sermonic fodder so low in the manger that the lambs could nibble it; but Christ, by both precept and example, counsels us to place the whole Gospel within the reach of all.

2. His picturesqueness. He never preached truth on a flat surface but always in relief. It glowed in the colours of sky and field. It forced its way to brain and conscience through Eyegate and Ear-gate. It de-

manded attention not for its own sake only but for the splendid attire in which the great Master clothed it.

We are usually content with a mere statement of truth: He rarely was. He knew the aversion of the natural heart to spiritual things: wherefore He called to His aid all forms and figures of speech. If He spoke of Influence, it was now salt, now light. If His theme was Religion, it became a pearl of incomparable value, so precious that a wise merchant might well dispose of all his treasures to secure it. Service is wielding the sickle in a yellow field. Indolence is standing in the market-place with folded hands. Consecration is stewardship. Benevolence is helping a man who has been waylaid on the Bloody Way. Forgiveness is erasing a charge of ten thousand talents; and Ingratitude is going out, with that cancelled charge in hand, to collect a bill of a hundred pence. Worldliness is a fool boasting of great possessions, which are destined to be sequestrated at nightfall. Avarice is a camel trying to go through a needle's eye. Heaven is home; and Hell is being out in the dark, away from God. Prayer is an importunate man knocking at his neighbour's door for bread at midnight. Censoriousness is a man with a beam in his eye complaining of another with a mote in his. Insincerity is a whited sepulchre, fair without but within full of dead men's bones. Providence is God's care for an odd sparrow. Thus the great Preacher shows us how to bring abstract truths within the range of simple minds and how to force them upon the attention of all.

3. His versatility. In the brief compass of His recorded words He touched upon all the great truths of the spiritual life and upon all the essential requirements

of the moral law, yet with such variety of treatment that one never grows weary of hearing Him. This fact is worthy of our careful consideration; for we are over-inclined to preach in ruts and grooves. The circumference of truth is large enough to afford variety in abundance; but, unless we guard against our natural disposition, we shall stand foot-fast, on a small arc of the great circle, drawing out one sort of doctrinal or ethical thought until our congregations nod as they murmur, "When will he be done with it?" I do not mean that we are to go far afield in search of novelty; but, standing beneath the shadow of the Cross, with all the points of the compass at our command, why should we stare fixedly at one small sunlit spot on an infinite horizon?

4. His use of Scripture. At the beginning of His ministry He went into the synagogue at Nazareth and opened the Book; and, having found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," He began to say unto them, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv. 16–21). And thence, through His entire ministry, He went "preaching the Word." It is written, "The people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God" (Luke v. 1). He was the great expository preacher. The Law and the Prophets were ever on His lips. Of the Scripture He said, "It cannot be broken" (John x. 35); and, "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be ful-

filled" (Matt. v. 18). As to the Prophets He found the Messianic hope running through them like the theme of an oratorio. All prophecy "must needs be fulfilled." Fulfilled! Fulfilled! This was His constant word. Luthardt says, "The position which Jesus takes with respect to the Old Testament, and the estimation in which He holds it, may be clearly seen by the use He makes of it. He unquestionably regards the Old Testament as absolutely the Word of God." Canon Liddon says, "The trustworthiness of the Old Testament is, in fact, inseparable from the trustworthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if we believe that He is the true light of the world, we shall resolutely close our ears against any of the suggestions of the falsehood of those Hebrew Scriptures which have received the stamp of His divine authority." This was the testimony of Jesus all through His ministry to the very end. On the day of His resurrection He, unrecognized, joined two of His disciples, who, as they journeyed to Emmaus, sadly discussed the failure of their hopes. At length He said, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" And then "beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 25).

It is not strange that our Lord, whose preaching was so faithful to the Scriptures, should have prescribed the same method for us. He commissioned His disciples to "go preach." Preach what? The Word. The law of the kingdom is germination. The figure is seed-growing. "He spake a parable unto them saying, 'A sower went forth to sow his seed'"; and when His disciples asked Him the meaning of this parable, He

said, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God." Wherefore, in the work of the kingdom His disciples went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts viii. 4; Col. i. 25; 2 Tim. iv. 2).

We are not required to regenerate souls. This is the divine prerogative. But we are bound to disseminate the Word; and through the Word the Lord saves men. The Church shall not fulfill her obligation until her missionaries go to the uttermost parts of the earth, scattering the words of Scripture as leaves of the tree of life. God will do the rest. His promise is sure. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. lv. 10).

The experience of the past has proven beyond all peradventure that the secret of success in evangelization is implicit faith in the Word of God. A Bible preacher is a preacher of power. A Bible preacher is a fisher of men. Mr. Moody, not long before his death, showed me a petition signed by sixteen thousand of the people of Australia and Tasmania, entreating him to come over and "preach the Old Bible and the Blood of Christ." "The Old Bible," said he, "has not lost its power. They may rail at it, they may revile it, but it stands as an impregnable rock. And it has power to save men!" This was the secret of Mr. Moody's marvellous success. He sowed the Word, and God fulfilled

His promise; the song of harvest-home greeted the great evangelist as he entered the heavenly city.

If we would be good soldiers of Christ, we must be loyal to the Scriptures. In our equipment (Eph. vi. 11–18), though there are many parts of armour, there is but a single weapon; namely, "the sword of the Spirit." He who would enter battle with a wooden sword must know himself foredoomed to failure; but a fine confidence nerves the arm of the Christian who reads on his Damascus blade the name of the divine forger. In the hour of temptation, in the front of duty, in the service of the kingdom, he shall quit himself as a good soldier, if only he grasp firmly "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

5. His practicalness. He did not guess, or theorize, or speculate, or spend his strength on the splitting of hairs or the building of castles in the air. He spoke straight at the minds and consciences and hearts of men with reference to truths and duties necessary to be known for present welfare and, above all, for the endless life. His only written sermon, so far as we are informed, was when the religious leaders dragged an adulterous woman up the temple stairs and threw her down before Him saying, "Moses saith that such as she shall be stoned; but what sayest Thou?" He stooped then and, as it might appear, wrote on the dust of the pavement: "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at her!" A sermon an hour long would not have cut so deep or carried so far. See them now, going out "one by one, beginning at the eldest"! That was a sermon with a harpoon in it. The custom of Christ was to aim His preaching so as to make righteousness search out sin and put it to an open shame.

6. His optimism. He could afford to be optimistic because He saw the end from the beginning. He knew that, however wrong and error may seem to have the upper hand for a time, truth and righteousness are certain to prevail in the long run. Wherefore His preaching rings with "Fear not." Our faith in Him should lift our preaching to the same major key.

> "Fear not! The waster builds again:
> A charmèd life old Goodness hath;
> The tares may perish, but the grain
> Is not for death."

If the eleven disciples who came down out of the upper room, after the ascension of Christ, had been asked what they now proposed to do, and if they had answered, "We are going forth to the conquest of the world," they would have been laughed at. But at the end of the first century the eleven had become half a million; at the end of the fifth century they were ten millions; at the end of the fifteenth they were one hundred millions; at the end of the eighteenth they were two hundred millions; at the end of the nineteenth they were above four hundred millions; and still the royal standards onward go! Why should we borrow trouble for the future? Let us preach as if we believed our Bibles and as if the impressive logic of events had not been lost upon us.

7. His tone of authority. "He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The word "authority" is *exousia;* that is, something coming from within. He did not derive His authority, as the scribes did, from ancient worthies or from precedents; but from His own consciousness. The Court of Ultimate Appeal

was in His own breast; as He said, "I am the Truth." It was for this reason that He could speak with a Yea and Amen and "Verily, verily, I say unto you." In this we cannot copy Him. Our *ipse dixit* is but as tin thunder in the presence of men and women who are as wise as we. Nevertheless we are quite at liberty to dogmatize, if only we dogmatize upon the authority of the written and incarnate Word of God. We cannot say "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; but we can say "Thus saith the Lord," or "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said." And when we postulate our statements on such authority we are not at liberty to speak in doubtful terms. We are not at liberty to put an if or a peradventure into any truth which Christ affirms with a "Verily, verily." Our certitude is measured by our faith.

The reason why people come to church is not because they want to know what the preacher thinks about this or that: they want to know what God has to say about it. They expect us, as students of His Word, to know its content; and we are under bonds to declare faithfully, fearlessly and confidently the whole counsel of God.

Our success as preachers will be measured in the long run by our imitation of the method of Christ. But back of the preacher is always the man. We cannot preach like Christ unless we live like Him. Wherefore let us pray that the mind that was in Christ Jesus may be also in us.

> "Lord, make me like Thyself:
> Lord, make me be myself;
> Seeming as one who lives to Thee,
> And being what I seem to be."

It is said that centuries ago, in the public square of an Italian city, an unknown wandering friar preached to the people about Christ and Him crucified so eloquently that all were melted to tears: and then he went his way. As the years passed the story of that wonderful sermon was handed down from generation to generation until it became a tradition. At length the devout people of that city resolved to erect a monument to the memory of the eloquent friar. The marble shaft was prepared accordingly; but what name should be inscribed upon it? No one knew his name; none could remember ever having heard it. The archives of the city were searched in vain. In due time, however, the marble shaft was erected: and there it stands to this day, inscribed with a single word, a name, but not the preacher's name. The word is "JESUS"—the name which is above every other that is named in heaven or on earth.

My brethren in the ministry, when our work is finished and our voices are hushed, though our names be forgotten, may it be remembered of us that we preached Christ and Him crucified; and however we may pass into forgetfulness, may we leave behind us the fragrance of His Name: who in all our preaching, as in our lives, must be Alpha and Omega; first, last, midst and all in all.

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